00059738

NOT TO BE ISSUED
OUT OF THE LIBRARY.

THE
ASIATIC SOCIETY OF BOMBAY
Town Hall, Bombay

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 June, 2016

SPIRITUAL DESPOTISM.

BY THE AUTHOR OF

NATURAL HISTORY OF ENTHUSIASM.

Πολὺς οὖν κἀνταῦθα ὁ κίνδυνος, καὶ στενὴ καὶ τεθλιμμένη ἡ ὁδὸς, ἡ ὑπὸ κρημνῶν ἀμφότερωθεν ἀπειλημμένη.

59738

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

HOLDSWORTH AND BALL,

AMEN CORNER.

M DCCC XXX

LONDON:

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD-STREET-HILL,
DOCTORS' COMMONS.

CONTENTS.

SECTION I.

PAGE

The Present Crisis of Church Power 1

SECTION II.

General Conditions of Hierarchical Power 30

SECTION III.

Sketch of Ancient Hierarchies, and that of the Jews . . 80

SECTION IV.

Rudiments of Church Polity 118

SECTION V.

First Steps of Spiritual Despotism 187

SECTION VI.

PAGE

Era of the Balance of the Civil and Ecclesiastical Powers 243

SECTION VII.

The Church Ascendant 293

SECTION VIII.

Spiritual Despotism supplanted by Secular Tyranny . . 348

SECTION IX.

Present Disparagements of the Ministers of Religion . . 372

SECTION X.

General Inferences 406

Notes and Illustrations 427

ADVERTISEMENT.

The Author has seen reason, the grounds of which it is not important to state, for altering the order of the volumes he has announced; and in the stead of Superstition, offers to the reader Spiritual Despotism.

SPIRITUAL DESPOTISM.

SECTION I.

THE PRESENT CRISIS OF CHURCH POWER.

The alliance between Church and State is loudly denounced as the source and means of spiritual despotism. But history shows that sacerdotal tyranny may reach its height while the Church is struggling against a hostile civil power. No practical inference therefore, professing to be drawn from the testimony of facts, can be valid, unless what has been incidental to hierarchical usurpation is clearly distinguished from what was its essential principle. Otherwise, we may unwittingly promote the very abuses we wish to exclude; and may be led moreover to spurn the most important of all the axioms that should give law to the social system.

Again; the maintenance of the clergy through the medium of a legal provision has, with as little regard to the genuine lessons of experience, been assigned as a chief cause of the corruption of Christianity. No allegation can stand more fully contradicted by the records of antiquity than does this; nor can any thing be more easy than to disprove the assertion.

Once more: the arrogant and encroaching episcopacy of the early ages, from which the proper counterpoise had been removed, has furnished a specious argument in modern times, bearing against that form of church government which is strongly inferred to have been sanctioned by apostolic practice, which is approved by the common sense of mankind in parallel instances; and a form too which the spread of Christianity at once demands, and insensibly introduces. A main intention then of the present volume is to point out to the candid reader the unsoundness of certain popular opinions on the above-named important subjects; and to show the futility of the arguments that have had any such assumptions as their basis.

While thus, at the threshold of his argument, the author explicitly declares his purpose and opinion—an opinion he hopes to substantiate by proper evidence, he must not be misunderstood as wishing to dogmatise where the wisest, the best, and the most accomplished men have ranged themselves on opposite sides. Not a

little oppressed by the consciousness that he must advance what none of our religious parties will altogether approve, and what some of them will vehemently distaste, he throws himself upon the candour and generous sympathy of all, in every communion, whose concern for Christianity is serious and sincere. Disclaiming (as he has endeavoured to repress) every feeling unbecoming the holy gospel which he most earnestly desires to promote, he will not believe that any who entertain the same paramount desire, will account him an enemy, even though he may assail their fondest and their firmest convictions.

This indeed should be confessed, that, to whatever general principle of church polity we turn, probable dangers present themselves, and serious difficulties attend our course in giving them effect. The candid and the well-informed will be always ready to acknowledge, what they must so often painfully feel—the many peculiar embarrassments that attach to every scheme of religious association. Moderation should spring from this feeling; nor moderation alone, but a manly resolution also, and unwearied diligence in collecting information from all sides, and in maturing opinions, such as may safely guide us in the arduous course upon which it is now inevitable that we should enter.

The religious interests of the British empire are very unlikely much longer to repose where

hitherto they have rested: the powers of change that are awake must be met and directed. Nor is it possible that a greater stake should be at hazard among any people; for the welfare of Britain, momentous as we must think it, is not all that is in question, since, with the religious and civil well-being of our own country the moral and spiritual renovation of all countries is involved. No national vanity is implied in saying so; for none can look at the course of events during the last forty years, or anticipate those almost certain movements of the moral world which await us, without confessing that the brightest and the fondest hopes we entertain on behalf of mankind at large, hang upon the auspicious or the ominous aspect of English Christianity.

In truth it has been the fate—we should rather say the glory, of the British people, in the course of their history, to have furnished practical solutions of the chief questions of political science, for the benefit of the civilized community. Nor have these problems been worked at small cost. Let it be granted that, as the forerunners of civilization in foreign adventure and conquest, or as discoverers on the peaceful paths of philosophy, or as masters of mechanic improvement and trade, the British laurels have been won with immense and immediate advantage to ourselves. But in teaching our neighbours the principles of civil

and religious liberty we have at once purchased our honours dearly, and reaped the fruits, if not sparingly, yet incompletely; or as if with a secret repugnance.

Nothing seems more probable than that now, once again, England—the arena of Europe and theatre of the world, should attract all eyes while she brings about an amended adjustment of her religious polity. Hitherto no country of the old continent, or of the new, has placed its church establishments on a foundation we can approve; nor are we by any means agreed in approving our own. We are called upon therefore to exert afresh our ancient prerogative; and to furnish, for the imitation of mankind, the model of a national Christian constitution.

The rights of conscience and the freedom of worship have already been fully established: none now openly call in question those first truths (last learned) which are the spring and reason of national prosperity, and the warranty of the many blessings they introduce. Yet, and it is a singular fact, the discoverers and the masters of axioms so clear and so important have been more tardy than some of their disciples in bringing them to bear upon their institutions. While other countries, inferior to ourselves, if not in general civilization, at least in religious feeling, have promptly availed themselves of the light which England has shed,

England herself has slowly recognized her own truths. Thus (as some astronomers suppose) the sun, while pouring from its upper atmosphere the radiance that enlivens the universe, itself remains shrouded in a sombre twilight.

What did any European people know of the principle or practice of religious liberty until they had learned the first, and seen something of the second, in England? And yet our admirers, or some of them, have outstripped us, both in the public acknowledgment, and in the application of the doctrine. Until very lately, even if it be not still so, our profession of this not-controverted truth, has been made, by one party with an ominous reservation; and by another has been so interpreted as to generate endless divisions. Hence it happens that our institutions and our practices remain full of anomalies, which either belie or dishonour our principles. In like manner often, the field of a battle which, in its issue, has restored peace and wealth to an empire, itself long exhibits the desolations of the terrible encounter; and is the last spot to be covered anew with the harvests that were won there for other lands.

But it is far from being enough that we understand and enjoy, did we even enjoy it in the completest manner, religious liberty: this were but a negative benefit. To be exempt from sacerdotal usurpations is indeed an inestimable blessing; and to be free from the terror

of ecclesiastical tribunals is a deliverance worth whatever it may cost. Yet it will satisfy those only who would not care if left to forget religion altogether. Such is far from being the mind of the English people at large. It has not now become, any more than it has ever been, the characteristic of the British nation, either to rest in a profligate indifferency toward religion, or with a servile obsequiousness to bow to the childish pomps of a despised superstition. The mass of the people, and especially of the middle classes, are serious in their belief (whether right or wrong in particular opinions) sincere in their professions, and disposed to pay a manly and religious respect to whatever in matters of religion may seem to deserve it. Quite unlike some of our neighbours, we shall not be found boasting of atheism in one hour, and bowing to idols in the next. The English ask for a religion, and it must be a religion they can honestly cherish: or to say all that need be said, in a word—Christianity is our choice, and the Bible our rule.

This Christianity by the Divine favour we actually possess; and this Bible we read and reverence; and if our national religion be looked at only in a broad and indefinite manner, nothing seems wanting except a continued and increased diligence on all hands, in diffusing and enforcing the heavenly benefit. But if the external profession of Christianity be regarded under the

actual conditions that attach to it; or if our national religion be thought of as a bond of peace, and a prop of social order, it is found to have become the subject of very serious, and, as it seems, irreconcileable misunderstandings, such as at once paralyse its spiritual energies, pervert its moral influence, forbid its universal diffusion, enhearten its adversaries, and throw a portentous shade over all our institutions, civil as well as ecclesiastical. The divisions—now much exasperated, that exist among us on questions belonging to the exterior forms and the profession of religion, are of a kind that affect the Christian with inexpressible grief, the patriot with shame and dismay, and the statesman with hopeless perplexity.

The usual prelude of open hostility has actually been gone through with; namely, an exact numbering and comparing of forces among the combatants. The muster-rolls of party strength have been made up and read aloud;—dismal sound in the ears of the sons of peace! Instead of its being inquired, as it should among a Christian people, What are the means at our command for making an assault upon the irreligion of the world, upon its infidelity, and its polytheism, the cry is, Are WE, of this party, strong enough to overthrow our brethren of that? Christianity has in no age of her history offered a spectacle more humiliating to her friends than the one she now presents within her

home, the British empire. If the Gospel was disgraced by the superstitions of the tenth century, those errors and follies were palliated by the general ignorance of the times; but the guilt and absurdity of the factions of the present day are enhanced to a high pitch by the intelligence that surrounds us. The light, the liberty, the energy, that mark the current era, instead of being interpretable, as they should, in an auspicious sense, have of late become only so many omens of ill; inasmuch as they immensely aggravate the criminality of our discords.

Shall we never learn to contemplate the religious divisions of the country with that grasp of understanding and breadth of feeling that become vigorous and well-ordered minds? Both sides, in the great controversy of the day, exult where they should lament, and deplore what they should rejoice in; blame others for their own faults, and commend themselves where the praise, if any, belongs to their opponents. Instead of inveighing, with imbecile petulance, against dissent, and instead of denouncing the 'schismatics' as contemners of heaven, the Churchman would do better modestly to consider that dissent, widely as it has spread, affords a strong presumptive evidence of the existence of some capital flaws, or at least errors of management on the part of the Establishment. The alleged reasons of dissent the Churchman may think insufficient; but the actual causes of

dissent assuredly involve a heavy blame, which must fall, either upon the original constitution, or upon the administration of the Church; and probably upon both. The Churchman, therefore, if wise, would, without losing a day of irrecoverable time, inquire concerning these faults, and apply the painful necessary remedy.

Again, if the Churchman possess the feelings of a Christian and a patriot, instead of glancing at the barn-roofed chapel and meeting-house with an evil eye and a grudge, he should loudly and ingenuously rejoice that the saving elements of truth are scattered so widely; and that the insufficiency, and the inefficiency of his Church are in some good degree supplied. What but a thorough illiberality of spirit can prevent a Christian man, on a Sunday morning, from exulting in the thought that, instead of ten thousand Christian congregations then assembling in the land, there are fifteen or twenty thousand? Some men surely have much to learn, and to unlearn, before they are qualified to join either in the chorus of philanthropy on earth, or in the anthem of worship in heaven.

On the other side the Dissenter, too often, is not less wrong in feeling and inference. Instead of retorting the accusation of schism upon the schismatic conditions imposed by the Church, he should cover himself with sackcloth when he recollects that dissent, within itself, is divided

by a dozen frivolous disagreements, and that separation upon separation still fails to satisfy that self-willed spirit which dissent has cherished. If dissent were ONE, the charge brought against the Church would come with irresistible force. But it is not; and there is reason with those who say, 'Although we were to remove the grounds of nonconformity, we should do nothing that would insure unity, or relieve Christianity from its opprobrium. Though there were no Dissenters, there would yet be, as in America, scores of sects.'

Furthermore, the Dissenter, were he accustomed to entertain comprehensive views of the national welfare, and did he but cherish that modesty which the especial difficulty of the subject should suggest, instead of boasting the political strength of his party, and of indulging factious hopes, founded on the embarrassments of the national Church, would endeavour anxiously to avert convulsions whence good could arise only remotely, and at a tremendous cost; and most especially, if ingenuous, and diffident (as a wise man always is of theoretic principles) he would abstain from urging the popular passions toward demolition; and on the contrary, would lend all his influence to those proposed reforms in the Church which must be fairly and consistently tried before it can be known whether a church establishment is, in principle, wrong and impracticable. To

assail the consolidated institutions of the land, and to throw a brand into a vast machinery, which we might find ourselves unable to replace, is not a course to which the dictates of common sense, or of political wisdom, or the spirit or precepts of the Gospel, give any sanction.

These reciprocal faults, which, be it remembered, attach much more to the leaders and organs of the several parties than to the mass of the people on either side, take effect especially upon the course of the controversy as carried on through the press. The opponents, neither of them deficient in ability, or in a fair measure of sincere intention, and perhaps genuine piety, yet, with some exceptions, want the calmness and candour that considers and admits the real strength of the adverse argument, and which reckons at the full the merits of an antagonist. (We say not here how lamentably both parties fall short of that enlightened and expansive charity, and that brotherly love which should recommend the Christian profession). But in this controversy, as in so many others, yet never more than in this, the opponents do not meet each other either in discussing abstract principles, or in proposing practical measures. When the former are brought forward, an unfair use is immediately made of the actual and incidental faults of the national Establishment; and when the latter are to be considered, every specific remedial proposition is discarded by

bringing up some sweeping speculative doctrine, or some untried theory.

As for example: the abstract question of the propriety and utility of ecclesiastical establishments is hardly ever left to its simple merits. The Churchman will not so leave it, because he has an actual Church to uphold—and this Church hotly assailed. The Dissenter will not, because he dares not forego the argumentative advantage he derives from the abuses or imperfections of our Establishment. Scarcely knowing how he might maintain his opposition if deprived of the sinister aid he draws from this source, abundant as he finds it, and well suited as it is to irritate popular resentment, he either blinks the abstract question altogether, or mixes up with it matters that are extrinsic and accidental: the Dissenter clings to pluralities as tenaciously almost as the pluralist himself.

Again, the Churchman, doubting whereto the assault on the Church, if yielded to, might proceed, and having his own prejudices, and perhaps interests, and those of his friends and patrons to care for, takes his stand, most inopportunely, upon advanced ground, which is already sapped, and which must fall in with him. The Church, with too many who make themselves her champions, means the Church untouched. Thus it is that few, if any, seriously and in good faith, inquire what our national Establishment, with its high intrinsic merits, might become in

the hands of able, honest, and cautious reformers. Or, in other words, few are willing to put the abstract question of a national establishment to the test of experience, by giving or restoring every possible advantage to the one we possess. This momentous problem demands, in truth, to be referred to some, if they could be found, who should be far more ingenuous and temperate, as well as enlightened, than are any Dissenters; and far more free and disinterested than are any Churchmen. Between the factious vehemence of the one, and the timid ephemeral counsels, or the miscalculating prejudices of the other, the high welfare of the empire is not unlikely to be shipwrecked.

The danger of such a catastrophe is not a little enhanced by the active interference of those who would not deny that they are coldly affected, or even ill-affected toward Christianity itself. The necessity of applying epithets of opprobrious sound to any set of men is a most unpleasant necessity; yet how can an argument be conducted if apt designations must not be employed? Renouncing then all offensive intention, as well as unkind feeling, it must be said that there exists among us, and almost in the consolidated form of a distinct faction, what may fairly be called the infidel and atheistic party;—a party powerful by its intelligence, and by its extensive possession of the periodic press (not to say its political

influence). Fine distinctions and nice shades of opinion not regarded, and amid the urgent affairs of life they cannot be regarded, those must needs be called infidels who, notwithstanding a ceremonious bow to the worship of the land, invariably array themselves against every mode of positive religious belief: nor again, can we scruple to call those atheists, who choose, on every occasion, to display their singular ingenuity in exhibiting the fallacy of whatever evidence is advanced in proof of the being and perfections of God. Writers may say, 'Far be it from us to deny the existence of an intelligent first cause; nevertheless *this* argument, and *this*, and *this*, usually urged by theologians in favour of the popular dogma, is manifestly inconclusive.' A manly ingenuousness would assuredly exchange so thin a disguise for a candid avowal of disbelief.

Be this as it may; the atheistic faction very naturally takes part against the established Church in the present season of her peril. Political tendencies, irreligious instincts, the prospect of a triumph over things and persons held sacred, the hope of seeing Christianity, in one of her principal forms, levelled with the dust and exposed to shame; indefinite expectations of booty, and a belief that, notwithstanding the zeal of the sects, religion altogether would not long survive the overthrow of a learned and respectable hierarchy interested in its support; these,

and other kindred motives, impel many, as well among the vulgar as the educated, to mix in a controversy foreign to their habits of thinking, and into which they bring no preparation, either of knowledge or of sentiment, that might lead them to a sound conclusion.

This irreligious interference in a religious controversy cannot fail to be in itself pernicious; but it becomes more so when caught at and encouraged by some who should know better how and where to choose allies. The aid we receive in argument, at any time, from persons between whom and ourselves there exists an absolute contrariety of first principles, may well be suspected, even if it ought not at once to be renounced. Undoubtedly some capital sophism forms the bond of that accidental connexion which makes us one with men whom we must think in every sense wrong. Let the infidel and the Dissenter join hands in upheaving the Church, and before the ruins have settled in the dust, the former will turn upon the latter, as then his sole enemy, and his easy victim.

Those who, in this instance, have fallen into the snare, would do well to mark the not obscure wishes of their coadjutors. These, assuming it as probable that the mass of mankind must always ask for a religion of some sort, will be well content so long as the religion of the populace is of a kind which themselves can easily hold in contempt. They are not forward

therefore, as once, in the young days of modern scepticism, to assail the fanaticism and sheer extravagance of certain sects; and moreover, impelled as it seems by the same motives, they now actually spread their shield over the enormities and follies of Romanism; and, with surprising eagerness, step in to defend the good old superstition against any new and vigorous assailant. The very same popery that was furiously run upon by the sceptics of the last age, is as zealously befriended by the sceptics of this. But, assured as they are, that the papacy has lost its tusks, and will never again command the sword of the state, they would very cheerfully stand by and see the picturesque pomps they may have admired at Brussels, Antwerp, Madrid, or Rome, restored to our English Churches, Cathedrals, and Squares.

The summer season of philosophic impiety is just at that time when some degrading and gorgeous superstition overawes the vulgar, decorates the frivolous hypocrisy of the opulent, and thickly shades from all eyes the serious verities of religion. Such, nearly, was the state of things with the pagan philosophers when Christianity broke upon the world; and such was it with the French Encyclopædists. Never shall it be so with English unbelievers; yet were this possible, these, more discreet than their predecessors, would know better than to use any efforts for demolishing the popular folly; on the contrary,

they would give it the aid of their talents, and the mock homage of their external reverence. What least of all this party would promote is a wise Church Reform, which it foresees would presently turn the balance of public feeling to the side of rational piety; and so would throw into contempt that scepticism which is now saved from it only by the obloquies that attach to our profession of Christianity. It is a common occurrence for perverse intentions to bring into conjunction the most opposite parties; and so it is now that, in decrying, or in denouncing, or in silently obstructing the necessary revision of our church polity, the enemies of all religion, and its zealous and most sincere friends, the Dissenters, and the interested favourers of corruption within the church, are found conspiring (though not in conspiracy) to prevent the public good; each having his private reason for wishing to avert what simple-minded and enlightened men most fervently desire.

We have just said, that those inauspicious exasperations which at present obstruct the course of our national religious improvement, attach far more to the leaders and organs of parties than to the mass of the people. A distinction like this is to be observed on most occasions of public excitement; but in the present instance a due recollection of it is of peculiar importance, inasmuch as the press, and espe-

cially the periodic press, has become almost the sole medium of party warfare. The periodic press not merely governs public sentiment, but it is from this that the actual complexion of public sentiment is gathered, though incorrectly.

Nothing, it must be granted, can seem more imprudent than for a writer to call in question those who, under our present literary economy, sit as the masters of his destiny. But the author (not, as he hopes, in the spirit of arrogance) long ago fixed it in his purpose to incur all hazards while discharging what he thinks his duty. In the present instance he must not conceal his opinion that what is needed, as preliminary to wholesome measures, is to disengage the public mind (if it might be done) from the despotism of the Periodic Press, and to loosen the yoke fastened upon the neck of the people by our Newspapers, Magazines, and Reviews.

The author on this occasion challenges the PUBLIC; and he looks too with confidence to the candour and generous feelings of not a few of those to whom, in their public capacity, what he has to say may apply. Many there are connected with the periodic press who distaste their task, who disallow much in which they are implicated, and who, in the freedom of private intercourse, would not hesitate to encourage the protest which the author is here bold enough to make. He appeals then to READERS; and to

those WRITERS too whose employment has not spoiled them as Christians and as men.

To deny, either the eminent ability with which the periodic press of this country is conducted, or the general benefits accruing from this modern system of intellectual circulation, would be purely splenetic. Our daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly journals, diffuse light and life through the community to an extent that has no parallel. And under ordinary circumstances, and when political and religious interests are running on in their wonted channels, and at an ordinary pace, even the factious constitution of our journals may perhaps have its convenience, and may give rise to little mischief. But it is far otherwise on those signal occasions when measures become necessary which every faction, for its particular reason, will oppose, and which, although approvable to the quiet good sense and right feeling of the people, are sure to be denounced and misrepresented by those who think the point of honour of higher obligation than the duty they owe to abstract truth; and who, accordingly, make it their rule to look, first to the interests of their party, which it would be discreditable to betray, and last to the welfare of the country, for which they are but remotely responsible.

Men whose spirits are hurried and tempers irritated by constant engagement with antagonists, and who are called upon to take a part, and to

give an opinion, even on the most difficult questions, at the moment when the Press stands, and into whose habits of thinking nothing that is cautious, deliberative, or modest, may enter, how should such lead the public mind upon new ground, and where every sort of embarrassment thickens around us? We must even go further, and ask whether the qualities that usually call men into the service of our periodic literature are, a genuine intelligence, and a high sense of duty and principle; or rather the mere faculty of ready composition, and the command of a spirited style, together with that mental vivacity and those inflamed intellectual passions which are seldom combined with vigorous good sense, or with expansive views, or with substantial acquirements; and never with humble and fervent piety. The very dispositions we most need in difficult seasons, are those that ought not in fairness to be looked for in that scene of flutter and necessity—the editor's room. Our Reformation from popery was not concocted or carried through in any such temples of confusion. Great minds, carefully nurtured, came out from their retirements to meet that great occasion. The press did indeed aid the Reformation; but the press was not then as now, in a condition to distract it. The men who thought, spoke, argued, and suffered, did not spend their days and nights under the very roofs that shake with the mighty throes of the

printing engine. If the same Reformation is to be carried forward to its consummation, the band of editors and contributors must wheel off from the ground, and give room to artizans of another order.

Hitherto it has not been found practicable to establish a journal which should be other than the organ of a portion of the community. Ruled, either by immediate considerations of profit, or looked upon as the means of upholding and furthering particular interests, a philosophic impartiality can by no means find place in works of this class. Whatever is great or sincere, must pass under a censorship of a special sort, and be questioned in its remotest bearings upon every prejudice. Individually, the editor and his coadjutors may have their enlargement of mind, or their conscience; but the door-way into their office is narrow. The law and the policy of the journal is to assail and to defend given interests;—too often to assail and to defend individuals.

We have spoken of those circumstances which render it highly unlikely that, on peculiar and difficult occasions, the country should be wisely led by our journals. But there is another, and a not less important aspect of the subject.

We are too much in the habit, on all sides, of forming our opinion of other parties, and even of our own party, from the character and ex-

pressions of the several journals that are the acknowledged organs of those parties. But this method of judging of our brethren, and of think ing of ourselves, is at once illusory, and fraught with pernicious consequences. In doing so we look into a glass that distorts whatever it reflects. Let us believe it—let us believe it as well of our neighbours as of ourselves, that we are much better men, and more wise, and calm, and more christian-like, than the newspaper or the review that lies on our table represents us. The violence and the bigotry which we read and subscribe to, we inwardly loathe; and what other men undertake to say for us, we should abhor to say for ourselves. Feeling this, each individually as we do, we are bound in justice and charity to impute similar feelings to our brethren of other communions. We are all, in common, not only misled, but misrepresented, if not slandered by the forward persons who write in our name. The commencement of every thing that is happy and good would be a general and vivid consciousness, on the part of the people at large, of the wrong done them by the journalists whom they patronise.

The aim of the paper or the review (exceptions duly allowed for, and there are exceptions) is not so much to speak what its party feels, as to work up the sentiments of the community to a necessary pitch, to give those sentiments a special direction, and to

throw a desirable colour of public spirit over factious proceedings. There is then always a measurable interval, and often a wide one, between the journal and its readers; and nothing can, at the present moment, be much more important than that this DIFFERENCE should be understood, and calculated upon in our projects of amendment.

An appeal is here made to the personal consciousness of every Christian reader, and to his particular acquaintance with the religious circle in the midst of which he moves, while this broad affirmation is advanced—That the British people, and especially the religious portion of it, is less factious and perverse, is more docile, and more ready to approve of reasonable conciliatory measures, than it appears to be when judged of by the spirit and temper of our newspapers, magazines, and reviews. The happy tranquil intercourse of Christians in the walks of private life belies the intemperance of the literary leaders of party. Hence it will follow that certain schemes of conciliation, which must seem utterly chimerical, if looked at in the light reflected from their flushed pages, and which editors and reviewers will surely denounce as absurd, may deserve to be seriously pondered; and especially so if the means could be found of bringing them to bear upon the public mind apart from the intervention of sectarian writers. No man could stand in a nobler or more auspicious position

than one who should be able to hold this interference at bay, and to work directly upon the better nature of the christian public.

The interval, or moral difference, between readers and writers to which we refer, is a capital circumstance, very necessary to be understood and allowed for in reference to every age of Christianity. It is a circumstance that has been far too little considered by the compilers of church history; and a new light might be shed upon several eras merely by pursuing those incidental intimations through which the actual state of the community, as distinguished from the temper of the authors of the time, may be discerned. At some moments, no doubt, this difference has been in favour of the writers; but more often in favour of the people. At the present moment, it can hardly be assumed as probable, that the intense excitements, of every sort, that have borne upon the literary body, have operated to turn the scale in the opposite direction.

A just estimate of the character and influence of the Periodic Press, considered in relation to those great measures which the religious well-being of the empire demands, has, then, in its first bearing, a discouraging aspect; inasmuch as this influence is not easily to be stemmed, and runs vehemently against whatever is not sectarian. But, on the other hand, the unquestionable fact, that the Press does not truly

represent the religious community, opens an unexpected and a most cheering prospect of possible improvements in our ecclesiastical condition, when once the means shall be found of coming in contact with the good sense, and kindliness, and piety of the people.

The British christian commonwealth is not to be despaired of. Disabused of illusions, and disengaged from factious guidance, our country would be great in religion, as she has been great in arts, arms, and civil polity. It cannot be that the reason of so reasonable a people should for ever suffer depression; or that their sincere and fervent Christianity should for ever be deformed by frivolous and acrimonious disagreements.

The present crisis of ecclesiastical principles ought, it is true, to be looked at by religious men in a religious light; and it behoves such to be constantly on their guard against the tendency of controversies such as these to slide off to the lower ground of political interests. The best means, perhaps, for preserving in our own minds this necessary distinction, is to place clearly in view the utmost political bearing of the Church question, that so, being relieved at once from undefined terrors, we may the more steadily give attention to what indeed deserves the highest regard.

The crisis of the Church we hold then to be

the crisis of the Constitution. Renouncing entirely, and even with contempt, those alarms which are made a pretext of by the defenders of corruption, who would fain have us believe that to reform a single abuse in the Church is the same thing as to draw out the ties and pins of the framework of the State, it is yet, as we assume, not to be denied that the feeling and the principle which now threaten the Church of England, threaten also, and not very remotely, those civil institutions that stand as a fence against pure democracy. The dissenting clergy, without being theoretic republicans (the contrary is to a great extent the fact, and in the most decisive sense) have gradually yielded to a doctrine, however much softened in practice, that involves untempered democracy, and have recognized a sovereign power in the people, over the clerical order, unheard of till of late, and absolutely incompatible with the necessary dignity of their office, and the free and efficient discharge of their duties. This false step is not to be retraced; —relinquished power is not to be recovered; the tide is let out, and rolls on, and all that can be done by the (dissenting) clergy in the way of retaining the influence that remains to them, is to ride on the ridge of the wave, and to be loud and zealous in favouring popular impulses, and to lead the way onward still, where to stop is to fall.

In this very manner the general opinions,

political and ecclesiastical, of the dissenting communities have already advanced very many paces during the last few years. The great and accomplished nonconformists of the past age would startle at the principles now maintained in dissenting publications. The same movement must, by the necessity of the case, go on. We have not yet heard the whole of the theory that is working itself into the light. The political tendency of the times favours its development; the Dissenter will find listeners in the crowd, and coadjutors in the senate, and will himself be borne on far beyond his own first intentions. To affirm that the Dissenters of the present day are either faint in their loyalty, or loosely attached to the existing constitution, is a calumny, and can never be believed by any who are personally acquainted with their prevailing sentiments. Rejecting this slander, which we do in the most peremptory manner; we yet calculate the elements of the orbit in which they are moving:—we see the velocity, we feel the momentum, and we well know what point the hyperbolic course they are on must reach.

On a subject so nice as this no man will readily receive his opinion from another; and none ought to resent the opinion entertained by another. We are not, be it remembered, imputing designs, or sounding the alarm of treason and conspiracy; but are indicating only the natural tendency of principles; and we assume it as no extravagant

surmise that, whatever hitherto the nations of Europe have admired, and some of them emulated in the British constitution, will instantly sustain the unbroken impetus of popular impatience should the English Church be subverted. If indeed pure republicanism be the highest political good, let us calmly watch the progress of the assault upon the Church. But if the BRITISH CONSTITUTION be good, and if we desire to uphold and to perpetuate that form of the social system which used to be thought by Britons admirable, and by the world enviable, then must we anxiously inquire whether the Church of England can, and will, admit that renovation of her powers which may enable her to cope with the times, to survive the agitation of the moment, and to continue, as she has been, the guardian of our national welfare.

First then for the sake of Christianity, and then for the sake of the country, we should desire and promote the restoration of the Church. May HE who in so many signal instances has put honour upon England, and has sustained her amid the wreck of nations, and has rescued her peace when it seemed gone, and has kept alive within her the cordial profession of his Gospel; may HE now, in as great an emergency as has yet befallen her, send the spirit of wisdom and power, of moderation and charity, upon some who shall repair her desolations, and build her up for ever!

SECTION II.

GENERAL CONDITIONS OF HIERARCHICAL POWER.

THE position and the claims of the ministers of religion, as a body in the social system, are not easily to be determined. Difficulties that may be exchanged, sooner than avoided, attend every scheme of church polity. These embarrassments spring from the very nature of the interests in question; for until truth shall attain an ascendency in the world, religion, as to its exterior forms, must stand as an anomaly among the affairs of common life; and the ministers of religion inevitably sustain, in one manner or in another, the disadvantages that arise from this want of harmony between earth and heaven.

Conscious of the instability of their position, and feeling as if their dues and their authority might at any moment be brought into dispute, the clergy, in almost every age, have been tempted to set themselves at ease by means alike incompatible with their proper influence, and detrimental to the general welfare. Hence have resulted, in the first place, Spiritual Despotism, with its superstitions, its hypocrisies, its fabrications, its follies; and then those vehement reactions, that have ended, not merely in

humbling the priesthood, but in trampling upon religion. The history of Christianity, from the second century onward to the present moment, is the story of this growth and overthrow of church power; and moreover, as the overthrow yet remains to be consummated (for the papacy still lives) so does the reaction wait to be brought back to its just point. Neither the foundations nor the limits of sacerdotal authority have hitherto been satisfactorily ascertained in any Protestant country; and in England first principles on this subject are matters of controversy.

If the ministers of religion are to retain power enough to enable them to do good, they must be allowed to wield, in the freest manner, and without control, an indefinite influence — an influence not to be circumscribed by statutes. Any attempt to describe and define this peculiar species of power in the language of law, is not so much to curtail it, as to deny its very essence. Again; as the clergy draw the motives of their calling (or should do so) from reasons that are not commensurable with the inducements of worldly conduct, they can hardly consent to be dealt with on the ground of secular interests, without some compromise of honour and principle. At this point it has been found very hard to avoid a jar and clash of heterogeneous principles.

Furthermore, as the influence of the clergy touches the public mind at all points, and affects

it in a silent and intimate manner, such as the magistrate can neither follow nor countervail, he can scarcely avoid being troubled with suspicions, from which he naturally seeks relief by tampering with the integrity of the rival power, and by corruptly buying its favour. If the Church sternly rejects these adulterous overtures, and maintains her high independence, she will never be thought of by the State much otherwise than as an enemy in the bosom.

It is in vain that we contend for the absolute non-relationship of ecclesiastical corporations to the civil power. Even if the Church were willing to maintain such a refined doctrine, the State has not eyes nice enough to discern it; and will always reckon the religious bodies it has to do with, as in a positive sense, either its friends or its foes; and will feel them to be either its masters, or its subjects. If the Church, in relation to the State, be co-ordinate and irresponsible, a counterpoise exists, fraught with anxiety, and tending always to change. If it be subservient and obsequious, whatever renders religion efficacious or venerable is compromised. If it be transcendent and supreme, a country is converted into one vast dungeon of ghostly cruelty, of which the chief magistrate is only the gaoler.

Those who look upon the evolutions of religious principles solely or chiefly in a secular

light, naturally seek to evade difficulties of this sort by political management. Some, for example, would endeavour in all possible methods to lower and to divert the religious feeling of the community. By putting silent contempt upon the customary public references to the supreme Being and his providential government, and by freely opening to the mass of the people those sources of seductive pleasure which withdraw the popular mind from seriousness and reflection, they would dry up the springs of church power, and wither at the root the tree of piety. Only let the people, high and low, be imbued with the spirit of sensual gaiety, and let the public mind admit no other stimulus than what is drawn from physical science, and from commercial eagerness, and then we shall effectually set them free from the despotism of the priest; and stop too the course of religious agitations. What can be better than such a method—if all religion be an illusion?

Or another, and a less odious means of composing jarring interests, and of averting religious convulsions, would be that of insidiously forcing or tempting the clerical body, of all communions, into a condition of absolute dependence upon the State, and then to treat it, with much liberality of profession and much impartiality, but with substantial contempt, as the least esteemed, and the least important class of its stipendiaries. Such an order of things being

effected, the public purse might always be trusted to as a certain means of purchasing for the community just so much religion as is indispensable for binding together the social system, and for giving contentment to the superstitious. This method, like the first, might be eligible, if Christianity could be proved untrue.

There yet remains a scheme that may recommend itself to the politician; and it is that of suffering the active elements of religious sentiment to work as they may, only being so managed—now fanned, now checked, now let loose in one direction, and now in another, as that the dangerous force of the mass shall always be consumed within and upon itself. Religious parties, some ambitious, and therefore obsequious to the State; some simply enthusiastic, and therefore blind and variable; some fanatical and malignant, and therefore fit for imposing fear upon others, might, it may be thought, be so played against each other by skilful hands, as to maintain a general equilibrium and tranquillity. Find us these skilful hands in continuous succession, before such a scheme is talked of as practicable.

It is easy to say, and it would be easy to prove, that the religion of the Bible, generally diffused, and sincerely and fervently professed, would at once obviate the difficulties we have mentioned, as well as any others we may have forgotten. Under the most faulty church polity,

that has ever been devised, or without any polity, every thing would go on safely and well, if Christianity took full effect upon most men's minds; and if it continued to do so from age to age. Love is the fulfilling of the law; and Christian love, in its perfection, would supersede, as well as fulfil, all law. But we dare not leave the things of earth, even the best things, upon this ground. Abandoned to the efficacy of those high sentiments, that are produced only rarely, religious interests either evaporate, or give way to abuses, worse than the evils of too much legislation. Civil government, in all its provisions, implies the activity, and guards against the excesses, of malign and selfish passions. Church government must imply and do the same.

Two opposite errors here take their rise. The first is that of those who, disdaining, in religious matters, to consider mankind such as they are, assume vastly more than is ever realized; and rearing their ecclesiastical edifice upon ideal ground, make no provision against real dangers; and therefore leave the Church open to the insidious advance of the worse corruptions. The second error is that of secular and politic minds; and it consists in allowing too little scope to spiritual motives in spiritual affairs: with overcaution estimating motives at the lowest probable rate, it places religious offices upon what it deems the firm ground of ordinary inducements.

Under the influence of this latter error, religion invariably dies away: under the former it scarcely fails to become extravagant or corrupt.

The early Church, as was natural, adopted the lofty hypothesis which assumes that every thing which is sacred is really pure, and will always continue so; and from it sprung, very soon, the system that ripened into the despotism and dishonesty of the papacy. Our modern dissentients from establishments place themselves nearly on the same ground; but their progression in the same course is obstructed by exterior causes. The opposite fault, and it is a most serious one, has too far got ground in every one of those national establishments which, at the Reformation, displaced the Romish tyranny. The consequence, throughout protestant Europe, has been, a general decay of clerical efficiency, and a compromise of legitimate spiritual power for worldly advantages.

At the present moment these same antagonist principles are in a state of doubtful counterpoise throughout Christendom. Among the continental nations the old superstition, or the doctrine of the immaculate spirituality of persons, and infallibility of authorities, and immediate supernatural efficacy of offices, involving as it does mighty influences over the human mind, both on the side of hope and fear, and being in a sense purified by its recent losses of secular power, combats to advantage as well with the

coldness of Protestantism, as with the frivolity of the prevailing atheism, and is actually drawing to itself almost every thing that is genuine, fervent, and vital, around it. Events more unlikely have come about than would be the restoration of a refined (not a reformed) Romanism, from end to end of Europe.

In England, the two principles we have mentioned, stand on very different ground, and indeed are strangely intermixed among our several parties. For example; in her devotions and in her sacramental and other offices, the Established Church assumes the highest ground of spirituality: her public worship breathes the elevation of heaven, and speaks a sublimity—simple as sublime, which makes us forget the imperfections of earth. Those of her services too that have incurred the most blame, are to be defended only on this ground, that the Church assumes every thing within her precincts to be actually holy and valid. The Church, in these instances, disdains to suppose that any of her members may be false to their profession. But on the other hand this same Church, in her polity and external constitution, has embodied far too much of the secular principle; and is now greatly endangered through the rude exposure of it by her enemies.

The two incompatible elements—the hyperspiritual and the secular, or simply rational, are, with a like inconsistency, commingled in the

notions and practices of most of the dissident sects. These parties, in their doctrine concerning the derivation of the Christian ministry, and still more so in the practical exposition which the congregational system gives of that doctrine, take a very low ground—a ground not much raised above the idea of a teacher, exercising his function at the pleasure of those who maintain him. And yet these same persons, in their argument with the Established Church, when they roundly deny the lawfulness of a national religious polity, and when they plead for throwing religious interests altogether upon the variable impulses of the people from year to year, seem to suppose such a semi-miraculous administration of the world's affairs, or of the church's affairs, as excludes or supersedes human forethought, and the rational employment of ordinary means. In the view they take of the sacraments, as well as of the priesthood, and in their opinions on secondary theological questions, the Dissenters exhibit a decisive leaning toward what is most simple and intelligible, and a corresponding backwardness to admit any thing that savours of mystery,* or which may not, in a few words, be laid open to popular comprehension: a shrewd rationalism is the taste, if not the avowed principle of these bodies, in all but

* The author must not be supposed to call in question the orthodoxy of the great body of Dissenters: none are more steadily Trinitarian than they.

the higher truths of revelation. Nevertheless, in what relates to the propagation of the Gospel, or to its maintenance where it already exists, or to its safe transmission to the next age, no class of Christians have gone so far in calculating upon immediate interpositions of heaven; or at least have been so jealous of those prudential arrangements which secular discretion points to, as proper and necessary for securing these public interests.

One cannot but notice the fact, that, in those matters which human reason fails to grasp, and where as well the means as the end are veiled in some obscurity—to wit, the positive institutions of Christianity, the parties spoken of reject, as superstitious and absurd, whatever is not instantly intelligible. But, on the contrary, in those affairs which, in their nature, appertain to human agency, and in which the entire subject lies within our view—for example, the maintenance of public religion, in these they discard the suggestions of secular wisdom, and prefer to rely upon a succession of supernatural aids; or at least, act as if the ordinary course of human affairs did not hold in the history of the Church.

Those who are accustomed to view with calm and serious impartiality the temper and principles of religious communities, will not deny that grave inconsistencies attach to all sides in the instances above alluded to; inconsistencies that may readily be traced up

to the events of a past age. The Reformers wrought a great deliverance for us; but they did not ascertain principles; and since their time the Protestant communions, having stumbled in their course over untrodden ground, have wrangled one with another about the way, to little purpose. A season of tranquillity (should we enjoy one after the existing agitations have subsided) may probably be employed in a charitable and rational discussion of the rudiments of church polity.

The path toward such a discussion might be a little cleared by considering the principal extrinsic causes that have affected hierarchical power, either as enhancing or repressing it. At any rate, a brief review of these causes belongs to our present subject.

The main circumstances, then, that appear to have strengthened or modified the influence of the sacerdotal order, are the following, namely, first, The quality of the religion which it has had to administer: secondly, The intellectual and moral character of the people over whom this influence has been exerted: thirdly, The position of the hierarchy in relation to the civil authority: and lastly, though not of least moment, The source of church revenues. A word or two for each.

I. The quality of the religion; and when this is spoken of as a CAUSE, operating upon

the clergy, we must not overlook the many instances in which the Priest has created the Religion, and has made it to suit his purposes. To some extent, greater or less, this backward order of causation has taken place almost every where;—oftener than we may have supposed, we shall find both the dogmas and the usages of religious bodies bearing the marks of the priest's moulding finger. Nevertheless, every religion has had some elements, anterior to, and independent of sacerdotal control; and in most cases the clergy have received their religion, much more than formed it.

It is an obvious fact that Fear holds the first place among the passions excited by the idea of Unseen Power. Fear has at once a more extensive operation, and a stronger power, where it does operate, than any other religious emotion. Hence it will be generally true, that the religion which, in its doctrines and usages, is the most superstitious, will be the one that throws the greatest authority into the hands of the clergy. Other kinds of religious excitement affect certain tempers only; but there are very few minds that, while a dark superstition prevails around them, can entirely free themselves from its terrors. The most profane and the most sceptical, the rudest and the most philosophic spirits, have been seen at times subdued by religious fears, and so yielding themselves to the guidance of the priest. As well the mummeries

as the solemnities of an elaborate superstition subserve the purposes of spiritual domination; and thus the sacerdotal body has held the people fast, at once by the brazen chains of invisible vengeance, and by the cobwebs of frivolous ceremony.

An enthusiastic religion, or a fanatical one, may also become a fit engine of ghostly tyranny; but yet in a far less complete manner. Superstition enfeebles its victims; Enthusiasm, and still more Fanaticism, imparts to them a factitious strength; and therefore the priest has something personally to fear in availing himself of the force they yield: the fanaticism of the people can promote his ends only so long as he has the skill to direct it: his skill failing, it may rend himself. The priest of superstition rides an ass; the priest of fanaticism a tiger; and hence it has happened that the leaders of enthusiastic sects have almost always become proficients in that sort of guile which their difficult and perilous position demands.

To avoid forestalling the subject of the following Sections we abstain here from adducing specific instances: but the practical inference should be noticed, that, as a perverted or false religion favours spiritual despotism; so, wherever we find spiritual despotism in fact, we may pretty safely assume that the religious system it maintains is either false or corrupt.

II. National temperament, in a very marked manner, affects the extent of sacerdotal power. This qualifying influence is to be separately observed in relation to the clergy themselves, and in relation to the people. A pertinent example under the former head is furnished by adverting to the characteristic difference which very early became apparent between the Greek and the Latin churches; for while the clergy of eastern Christendom displayed the national propensity of the Grecian mind to theoretic refinement, to logical subtilty, and to boundless speculation, and made Christianity chiefly a matter of intellect; the clergy of the West, imbued with the Roman passion for power, looked upon the same Gospel, mainly, as opening a field of government; and very soon found in it, or added to it, whatever they thought necessary for consolidating a vast spiritual despotism. With the Greeks, the religion of Christ came in the place of the spent philosophy of their ancient schools; with the Latins, it was a new ensign which they might rear on the site of the overthrown empire of the Cæsars. In the East, clerical power propped itself, partly upon asceticism, and partly upon rhetorical accomplishments and learning; but in the West, the hierarchy moved steadily forward in their course of usurpation, until they snatched at, and could firmly grasp, the effective weapons of secular authority.

The diversities of national temperament, as affecting the people—the subjects of church power, may be exemplified in the instance of Spain, France, and England, the relations of which with the papacy have exhibited very strikingly the moral characteristics of each country. The first, arrogant, gloomy, yet indolent and acquiescent, has yielded herself without reluctance, and without making conditions, to the will of Rome, and has behaved herself as the darling daughter of the Church. It would hardly have been known what was in the heart of the mother, if she had had no such child. But France, while she has bowed, has stipulated for the national honour; and has treated the foreign usurpation with some becoming spirit. Not strong enough in moral force to shake off the oppression, she has yet carried herself gallantly under it. England, from of old, has been refractory: in every age she has impatiently brooked the insults offered to her strong sense and high feeling by insolent and rapacious Italian priests; and long before she actually broke the yoke, behaved in a manner that gave Rome itself warning of the events of the Reformation.

A due consideration of the settled dissimilarities of national character might suffice to invalidate those inferences that are often attempted to be applied to the institutions of one country, from the example of another. Although related by natural descent, and in a hundred other

ways, no two races of the civilized world are perhaps more broadly distinguished than are the English of Britain, and the English of America. The very relationship of the two people has formed a starting point, whence they have diverged. The people of the United States exist in agitation, and act from momentary excitements. The people of England are jealous of excitement; and though susceptible of agitation, gladly and quickly return to a state of rest. The love of order is as strong on this side the Atlantic, as is the disregard of it on the other. Here (a party excepted) authority, and those gradations of rank which are necessary to its stability, are steadily looked at, and are approved of as good and beneficial. There, from the domestic circle outward to the political, natural sentiments of deference are faint, and authority means very little beyond the limits of actual force. Climate has done something, the geographical conditions of the country have done something, and the political circumstances of the state more, to place the transatlantic English at the antipodes of Britain. We shall not then draw our models of government thence. No infatuation could be more irrational. A certain order of things may indeed be good in America; or it may be the best possible there, which is neither necessary, nor even practicable, nor in any sense whatever good, for England. England will no more

import a church polity from America, than she will import thence domestic slavery, or the republicanism which favours and endures it. Two very efficient causes preserve American Christianity from passing into some form of spiritual despotism: the first is the spirit of faction, which breaks the clerical body; the second is the spirit of trade, which has always been found in an especial manner to repel priestly encroachments. England assuredly may do better than take her lessons from those who as yet have so much to learn.

III. The power of a clerical corporation is of course essentially affected by the relationship in which it stands to the civil authority. It is a dream to suppose that a body of clergy can exist in any country in so quiescent or obscure a condition as to sustain no relationship whatever, as such, to the magistrate. He, at least, will never forget the ministers of religion, even if they are willing to be forgotten. The Christian ministry has never, not even in the era of its greatest purity, so floated in the political atmosphere as an invisible element; but has always stood in a tangible form among, or over-against, the powers of the State. If indeed all clerical persons and all private Christians were as child-like and heavenly as some few are, the Church need never be heard of at court; but it is not, nor has it ever been so: and

there is some disingenuousness in propounding schemes which can seem practicable only in idea, and which the events of a year or a month must show to have been founded upon illusory notions of human nature. The only rational question is this, What shall be the conditions of the alliance between Church and State—friendly and harmonious, and well concerted; or defensive, and cautionary, and suspicious?

Some indeed seem to think that those who have the care of souls need no more be regarded and dealt with corporately, by the State, than those are who have the care of the body; and that the relationship of the magistrate to the priest need involve nothing more than is included in his relation to the physician. But this comparison is devoid of all real analogy. The physician has to do with men individually, and apart: the priest has to do with them in congregation, and as combined under a system of powerful organization. The physician is called upon when the mind is occupied with the maladies of the body; but the minister of religion, both in his public and private functions, has to do with MIND immediately, and he treats it too in an excited state, or brings it into such a state. No function of common life is in fact analogous to that of the clergy, and no other presents itself as a counterpoise to the power of the magistrate: none like this, therefore, demands to be well defined, or at least well adjusted,

within the social system. The very reason on the ground of which it is alleged that the State may overlook and leave to itself the clerical body—namely, the spirituality of their office, and its independence of secular interests, might better be urged as an imperative motive for employing our best skill in arranging the relationship between Church and State. It is because religion brings in a power of a transcendent sort that we are called upon to guard against the abuse of it in the hands of the fanatical or the ambitious.

It cannot be said that the Church, meaning the clergy and their devoted flocks, has yet in any country or in any age stood precisely in that relationship to the civil government which we can think the most happy and safe. As for example, whatever good may have resulted from it, none would choose to place the Church on its primitive footing of oppression and persecution:—this may indeed at seasons be best for it, but it is the Lord who must say when. The condition which next followed was that of ambiguous friendship, and doubtful counterpoise; a condition which, in the nature of things, could not be permanent, nor is ever desirable. In fact it gave way, and very speedily, to a bold usurpation on the part of the Church, ending in the subversion or degradation of the secular power; and this was succeeded by a reaction and rescue, too vehement and impassioned to observe the

line of reason. To each of these states and stages we shall have occasion hereafter more distinctly to advert. At present we only name the political relationship of the clergy as a main condition of the influence they exert, whether for the better or the worse.

IV. The source of church revenues, the mode of collection, and the rule of distribution, are circumstances not always obtrusive in their influence; but always of the very highest moment, and of the greatest difficulty.

Some general statement of this question is every way indispensable to our prosecution of the subject in hand. In truth the point of church revenues comes little short of being the hinge of the whole argument.

And let the author here be permitted explicitly to reject the imputation of entertaining any feeling illiberal in itself, or of holding any opinion derogatory to the clerical character, or implying that this order is in any peculiar sense interested or eager of lucre. The candid reader undoubtedly will grant that the general tendency and intention of the present volume is not to assail, but to defend; not to depress or exclude, but to re-instate and corroborate; not to vilify, but to honour, the ministers of religion. Believing, as he firmly does, that the influence of the sacerdotal body at present labours under serious disadvantages in all Protestant countries,

and requires, for the public good, to be brought up to a higher mark, the author claims to be interpreted, in whatever he may say, in a sense consistent with his general purpose, and compatible with his professed feelings.

A peculiarity attaches to the working of those motives which take their spring from the natural desire of worldly comfort and competency; and it is this, that while these motives are, generally, more steady and efficient than any others, they are the least obtrusive or noticeable of any. It is on this ground that we are liable to be the most impelled, yet with the least consciousness of impulsion. Especially when the conduct of bodies of men is in question, is it true that the motive which, in the long run, actually draws all others in its wake, is the one concerning which the individuals (or most of them) might honestly declare that it was not uppermost in their minds. Many, through the entire course of their lives, have followed a leading which has never spoken aloud, or stood in the light.

In estimating the average influence of financial systems upon any order of men, it is idle to appeal to the disinterested and generous sentiments that may appear among them, or that may in some degree attach to the whole body. Such sentiments afford little or no security against a perverting bias of which few or none are distinctly conscious. Wherever, either in the material or the moral world, several active

causes are combined, it is seen that the one which, though it may appear the feeblest, is the most steady, and which presses on always in the same direction, at length gains upon all, and leads the way. So it is in a crowd, urging their course toward a narrow pass: some overpower their neighbours for a moment by convulsive efforts, or by superior strength; and others intimidate them by a noisy and arrogant demand of precedence; meanwhile there is one, perhaps, short of stature, and silent, who quietly and constantly presses onward; husbands his strength, improves every accidental advantage, slips in when others give way or stumble; alarms no fears, and in fact, penetrates the densest mass; and while his competitors are panting for life in the rear, clears his passage, and smiles at his own success.

It is somewhat in this manner that considerations of pecuniary interest take effect in our minds among other motives, some of which may in fact, as well as in semblance, sway our conduct, in single instances, with a more sovereign power. The difficult and perplexing occasions of life offer many ambiguous cases, wherein high motives stand opposed: the real and efficient power rests, in such instances, with that neuter motive, be it what it may, which is allowed to have the casting vote. The riddle of a man's history might often be opened by this key. In the mild and reasonable form of

a wish for competence, or in the inflamed state of avarice, the desire of money determines the current of life; in this channel run the mighty waters of the world's affairs.

But if this be true of the mass of mankind, is it so of the ministers of religion? Yes, true; but not in any sense that should throw upon them a peculiar discredit. Nothing can be more illiberal than to make those feelings a matter of reproach to any order of men, which are common to our nature. There is good room to affirm that the clerical body, take it in what age we please, compared with other bodies, has exhibited a fair superiority in disinterestedness and purity of conduct. It must however be admitted that the passion of avarice, like every other, is apt to be sharpened by restraint; and it will be found that those who, by the conditions of their office, are debarred from the open and healthy pursuit of fortune, exhibit often a sort of petulant avidity when occasions of gain are incidentally presented.

And we must advert once more to the important truth, that bodies of men, moving in concert, act in a manner that does not fairly indicate the personal dispositions of the individuals. Individuals do wrong; but bodies do mighty wrong; and do it without remorse: men singly have consciences; but a corporation has no conscience. A rational morality would indeed teach us that, although a booty is divided

in proportionate parts among the confederates, the guilt of the wrong perpetrated attaches, undivided and entire, to each of the accessories. But it is not thus that men are accustomed to think; and they rise from a table of iniquitous consultation, calculating that their share of the advantage is to be the measure of their share in the blame. Church history, like common history, illustrates abundantly this sort of casuistry; nor can we at all reconcile the proceedings of hierarchies with the personal reputation of the men who have acted under them, without making very frequent use of the distinction we have mentioned. The saints were saints in cloister, but not in conclave.

A balance of evils, and a compromise of advantages, has attached to every scheme of clerical maintenance hitherto devised. If the provision has been at once ample, and independent of the popular will, sloth, pride, and secularity, have crept upon those to whom mankind should look up for patterns of purity and heavenly-mindedness. On the other hand, it has always been seen, and the history of early Christianity affords the most striking exemplification of the truth, that when church revenues flow from the precarious liberality of the people, and are altogether undefined, exaggerations of doctrine, perversions of morality, superstitions, mummeries, hypocrisies, usurpations, cruelties,

gain ground, not always slowly, until priests and people — the Church and the State, are thoroughly infected with the worst sort of corruption—religious corruption.

If we wish to see what is now vauntingly termed, the Voluntary Principle, fully evolved, and ripened under a summer heat, we have only to turn to the Papacy—the produce of the voluntary principle, with its spiritual debauchery and its tyranny, its lying miracles, its lying mendicity, its lying sanctity, such as we find it in the tenth century: the Gospel utterly darkened, the civil authority trampled in the dust, the people bound in fetters of fear and ignorance, and the clergy transmuted into swine, or into wolves: these were the fruits of that system which leaves the priest to set his own price upon the spiritual goods he dispenses among the people.

What has happened once, may happen again; and will do so under like circumstances. We need not draw upon imagination in conceiving of the natural course of events, and the operation of common principles. The Church, we may suppose, instead of being befriended by the State, is barely tolerated, or perhaps oppressed. The clerical body, including as it may, many high-minded and disinterested individuals, is yet, as a body (what body is not?) actuated by the ordinary motives of our nature, and tends therefore, with a silent and steady momentum, toward its corporate aggrandizement, its wealth, its

ease, its credit, and its secure enjoyment of special prerogatives. Every corporation shifts itself, if it be possible, from precarious ground, and moves toward that which is firm. If then the State does not lend its aid in this endeavour of the clergy to substantiate their honours and revenues, a resource will be found of another sort, and the minds of the people will be worked upon with a proportionate eagerness, in order to make sure of their subserviency. Exaggerated doctrines will supply the place of legal provisions.

The spontaneous offerings of the people, we may suppose, do not quite fill the measure of sacerdotal avidity: nay, perhaps the real wants of the order are inadequately supplied. Moreover, the church income fluctuates, along with the fluctuations common to all mundane affairs; and seasons occur in which the clergy are exposed to vivid anxieties, or endure actual privations. In such a state of things, while the high-minded few will nobly suffer in patience, and while perhaps many do so; there will not be wanting some of a more politic turn, who, with a mixed intention—partly honest, partly sordid, will labour to remedy the inconvenience in the mode which naturally suggests itself to such spirits. The claims of God's ministers will be asserted in a hyperbolic, yet insidious style. The merit of the offering laid upon the altar of the Church will be overrated in a manner that at once enfeebles morality, and corrupts doctrine. Genuine virtue will be

made to give way to fictitious virtue. The just symmetry or relative magnitude of duties will be enormously distorted. Superstition, and her handmaid Farce, proffer their aid in this work, and some accommodated articles of belief, or certain special usages, which may have had another origin, and may possess some shadow of reason, will be converted to the purpose of levying incidental contributions. By newly discovered or newly expanded terrors, the conscience of the laity will be screwed up to the necessary pitch in the matter of pecuniary aid; and what the designing and the interested had first set a going, the sincere and fanatical will afterwards eagerly push forward as a sheer article of piety. In the next age learned theologians may be seen wasting their oil in confirming from Scripture, practices of which knaves were the inventors.

And yet all this while there is no compulsion; there is no tax-gatherer, or farmer of tithes; no State alliance. The voluntary principle is in its full triumphant course. Nevertheless a system of spiritual despotism, as cruel as it is foul, is fastening upon the necks of the people. The sword of the magistrate does not enforce the demands of the Church; but yet the widow's two mites are snatched from her hand by pampered priests; and orphans see their patrimony gorged by the bloated brotherhood of the monastery. Why do any people submit to an unarmed tyranny of this sort? nothing binds

them to obedience but sentiment and opinion: their goods would not be distrained were they flatly to refuse their accustomed quotas. Why do they submit? Ask the Christian commonalty of the third or fourth century; ask the European nations of the ninth; or, not to go so far, ask our contemporaries and countrymen, the starving inmates of Irish hovels.

In truth, what is called *voluntary* is often, in the worst sense, *compulsory;* while what, in common parlance, we term compulsory, is, in a rational and good sense, voluntary. Phrases caught at and appropriated without thought, in the heat of controversy, more often than not convey some gross misapprehensions of simple facts: it is thus in the present instance. The voluntary principle, as the source of clerical maintenance, in order to deserve the name, and to be sound and safe, must take its course under very peculiar and well guarded conditions; or it will inevitably either grind the ministers of religion, or bring upon the people the worst sort of compulsion. On the other hand, the compulsory system, as it is insidiously called, needs only to be conformed, in its mode of operation, to the analogy of good government in civil affairs, and we can wish for nothing more free or just.

Both the phrases in question, as used in the controversy of the day, refer to levies of money,

made for the support of the ministers of religion. In the one case the fund accrues from the unprescribed contributions of those who act, individually, under the mere impulse of their personal feelings and opinions. In the other case it flows, in an equable stream, from the entire community, and at the immediate bidding of the State; which, moreover, exacts from each citizen a sum regulated, as are other taxes, by his ability, or by the scale of his general expenditure: and this payment is enforced by the State, without regard to private inclinations. Under the former method it is always implied that, whoever chooses to do so, may relinquish his interest in the common benefit, and withdraw his contribution; or he may, at pleasure, diminish his quota. Under the latter, of course, relief is to be obtained only in those modes of legislative redress for which room must be left in all imposts: and under this latter method nothing else can happen, let the tax be adjusted as it may, but that individuals will be found who either disallow the propriety and abstract fitness of the tax; or who, from peculiar circumstances, are shut out from the benefits it dispenses; or who are aggrieved by the application of the general rule to their particular case. No ingenuity in framing laws can absolutely exclude incidental wrongs, or inconveniencies, of this sort. The inestimable advantages of living in society are unavoidably burdened with some partial evils.

Nothing very chimerical is supposed when we imagine the instance of a country, enjoying to the full the benefits of a representative system of government, and in which every question of polity is determined by the public will;—such a country, we say, great, and free, and wise, having become generally religious in its opinions and habits, and, moreover, having learned to worship Almighty God in harmony and love, has embraced the opinion (whether it be a just opinion or not) that the support of the clergy is one of those matters which, from the very peculiar conditions that attach to it, is more safely and effectively provided for by a public and invariable impost, than by the capricious liberality of a portion of the people. Thus thinking, the country taxes itself for the maintenance of religion; and, far from grudging a liberal support to its best friends and worthiest servants, it sees that its own highest welfare is involved in the comfort and independence of those who are at once to teach, and to enforce, morality. The clergy, tranquil in heart, and secured of a modest and reasonable competency, and protected, each in his private sphere, against the insolence of individuals; though not exempted from the salutary operation of public opinion, exercise their functions on the basis of the motives proper to it; and, at least, are free from any temptation to work upon the credulity of the people, or to pervert religion to sinister ends.

Such is our imagined instance. But it will be said—'This is COMPULSION: this is a Church and State alliance: this is religion by act of parliament;—and what not.' Be it so: nevertheless, it is a compulsion we should choose, and a bondage we should gladly sustain. Or, to compare it with the voluntary system which history has actually realized, the latter is a spontaneity we should shun, and a liberty we should dread.

Theories apart, and the lessons of experience duly regarded; or, in other words, church history looked into for practical uses, there appears reason to distrust what is termed the voluntary principle in relation to church revenues, on the two opposite grounds, of its inadequacy, and its exuberance; or its sluggishness in some respects, and its extravagance in others. During one and the same period, and within one and the same circle, this mode of maintaining the clergy has failed to propagate and to support Christianity; and yet has suffocated piety by its profusion: it has been not less niggardly, than prodigal.

If we desire, as undoubtedly we ought, to stimulate this power in a safe manner, and to turn it into auspicious channels, we should form a sober and exact estimate of its real efficiency, and of its necessary limits. This estimate can be formed on no other ground than that of experience; and if the hollow croaking voice of antiquity will not gain our ear, we must turn to

facts under our eye. These (as we assume) make it evident that a capital, and, as it seems, an irremediable defect attaches to the voluntary principle, first, in relation to the classes of the community it affects; and secondly, in relation to the purposes to which it may be made to apply.

For the first. The voluntary principle, as hitherto it has developed its powers, takes effect upon the several orders of the community in no just proportion; or rather, in no proportion at all; for while the middle and lower ranks yield themselves to its influence, the opulent and the noble are scarcely touched by it. On all subjects of public interest, the former are seen to be vastly more liable to be wrought upon by natural excitements than the latter; the latter, indeed, hardly in any sensible degree, and it must be confessed that the virtues of self-denying sympathy, and substantial generosity, expand in a much more vigorous and healthy manner among those who themselves are every day contending with the difficulties of a common lot, than among the pampered children of pleasure and security. No motive that has hitherto been brought to bear upon human nature has availed to make the rich liberal after the proportion of the poor.

It hence follows that, if the support of the ministers of religion were left entirely to the spontaneous feelings of the people, no equitable proportion of ability would be observed between

the wealthy and the indigent. If the spiritual wants of a country are to be fully supplied, a burden beyond endurance, and fatal to the general prosperity, would be thrown upon the middle classes, and upon the poor. It would be the noble-spirited artizan, the liberal shopkeeper, the generous yeoman, who would raise the minister's fund; while just gold enough to save appearances—a pepper-corn contribution, would be all that would come from the heaps of the opulent. In the present state of public sentiment, or in any state which the world or the Church has hitherto exhibited, or seems likely to exhibit, nothing less than an impost not to be evaded, and which should in a fair manner dive into the rich man's bags, will avail to throw the maintenance of the clergy, in any just proportion, upon the public wealth, or prevent its falling, with a ruinous pressure, upon the industrious and the poor.

If we may take the actual working of this voluntary principle among the English Dissenters as our guide in estimating its merits, we see it resting upon the communities that use it with every sort of disadvantageous inequality. Not here to speak of those ill consequences of this system which affect the clerical mind and temper, we find the salaries of the ministers (a few cases excepted) to be drawn chiefly from the pious liberality and affection of the humble and necessitous; while the opulent Dissenter

satisfies his sense of justice by paying for as many inches of pew-room as he and his family mathematically have need of; and in doing so, calmly sees his chosen spiritual guide—a man of piety, and of as much more sensibility as learning than himself, broken in heart by the embarrassments of an insufficient income. The enormous disparities and disproportions that attach to this method of supporting the ministry, would be enough to bring its eligibility into suspicion.

But again; a disproportion of another kind attends this same system; for, inasmuch as congregationalism insulates each chapel-society, and leaves each to bear its burden as it may, it follows, that, while the large congregations of great towns and cities raise the salaries of their ministers with no difficulty on the part of the individual contributors; the small congregations of lesser towns and of rural districts, groan under a burden, often of the most afflictive weight; and yet, with all their generous efforts, fail to afford to a worthy and esteemed pastor the ordinary comforts of life. It is indeed by no means desirable that the salaries of all ministers should be of the same amount: this equalization could not be effected without putting constraint upon the natural course of things; but unquestionably it is desirable that the *rate of contribution* should be, at least in some degree, conformed to a rule of equity. In every way a loss of fiscal power is sustained by a community

when one congregation is taxed at the rate of only two per cent. upon its resources, and another at the rate of twenty. The plainest dictate of common sense would demand that the church funds of a city or of a district, embracing, for example, four or five large congregations, and a dozen small ones, should be consolidated; and then that distribution should be made to the clergy of that district according to their wants, their merits, or their services. The clergy of a district, or diocese, drawing their incomes from a general chest, would be set at large from their dependence upon the managers of single congregations; and, at the same time, none need be left to suffer in solitude the miseries of indigence. On a plan of this sort, the superabundant wealth of cities would be let out to fertilize the country. In affairs of this kind, as in so many others, John Wesley displayed his clear good sense, and proved that he thought human reason, however at fault in matters of faith, to be fully applicable to the arrangement of secular interests: no religious theory stood in the way to interdict his efficient and economic constitutions.

In the second place, the voluntary principle, such as it is seen in actual operation, fails in relation to the OBJECTS to which it may be applied. Human nature involves great and generous impulses; but they are far from obeying, ordinarily, the guidance of reason. What is

spontaneous, we may admire oftener than imitate. The voluntary principle, as a source of religious funds, is indeed found to meet, and sometimes to exceed the demand made upon it, where vivid excitements can be brought afresh and afresh, to bear upon popular feelings; but in those instances which yield no such excitements, and which involve a comprehensive regard to remote consequences, it almost entirely fails, or leaves momentous interests to dwindle or perish. The people—not even the elect of the people, and it is the people we have to do with in religious affairs, the people will never care vividly and effectively for what they do not instantly comprehend. But the maintenance, the diffusion, and the safe transmission of religion, involve very many provisions and measures of a sort that appears superfluous, or even perhaps pernicious, to the half-taught and unthinking mass of mankind. It is extremely disingenuous to affect to deny this. The few, and a very few, perceive the necessity of this order of means: it is the few who must devise and arrange these measures; and the few who must carry them into effect. To throw religious interests, of every kind, upon popular impulses, is nothing less than to abandon some that are of prime importance.

The clamour which we now hear in behalf of the voluntary principle, is in character with that principle itself; and affords a proper

specimen of its qualities;—it is unthinking, variable, and reckless of remote consequences. A short time must suffice to bring back men of understanding to the mean of common sense on this subject. The voluntary principle, or (to drop an ambiguous and ill-chosen phrase) we should rather say, the generous impulses of the mass of the people, are admirable in their sphere; but they have only their sphere. Let it be imagined that a road were opened across the fields of space to some planet of our system, more beclouded than our own; and that the proposition were made to the Christian world to send thither the elements of sacred knowledge. A river of gold would pour into the treasure-chest of such an enterprise. But, instead of this animating scheme of benevolence, let us undertake the founding of a college, on a large, rational, and efficient plan; and such as should promise to supply the Church, through a course of ages, with a well-trained clergy:—the ear of the religious public is not to be awakened by this chord. An Alfred, or a Wolsey, may achieve such a work; but never the good folks that fill our chapels, or throng around our platforms.

Nor is it objects of this unpopular sort merely, that will be overlooked by the popular mind. While amazing and highly commendable efforts are making by the religious community to send the gospel abroad, nothing like a proportionate

exertion is made to maintain and diffuse it at home. The one object is rich in excitement; the other appeals coldly to conscience. The one, therefore, counts its gold by thousands, the other by tens.

A degree of intelligence, and of steady consistent principle, such as never yet has belonged to any Christian people, must have become prevalent, and permanently so, before it can be safe, or other than a sheer infatuation, to throw ourselves altogether upon popular caprice, for the support of religion and learning. This would not be wise, even in framing new constitutions upon new ground; much less would it be wise to permit the funds actually devoted by our predecessors to the support of public worship and education, to be invaded. In this country we are not now called upon to compose afresh the bare elements of the social system, or to discuss primary and abstract political doctrines; but to decide upon the practical and very intelligible question of upholding our actual and ancient institutions, and of defending them, during an unquiet season, against popular restlessness and factious intentions. We are not to found an Establishment;—we possess one. We are not balancing between untried schemes; but are entrusted with the care of institutions commended to us by our fathers, and which we may not break up, or suffer to be broken up, without incurring a heavier responsibility than

we have the means of estimating: it is our sons who will weigh our imprudence, arraign our treachery, or contemn our cowardice.

The want of ingenuousness, and of intelligence, too, that marks the present advocacy of the voluntary principle, tends to bring into discredit a mighty engine of Christian benevolence, indeed, the only engine that can be relied upon for effecting the vast enterprises of charity which our hearts cherish on behalf of mankind at large.

And let it be remembered that, while we call in question this method of maintaining the ministers of religion, and insist upon its insufficiency, its inequality, and its unhappy, though concealed influence, a high praise is, or ought to be secured, for the thousands among us who, from moderate resources, cheerfully draw what they draw for the support of their clergy. Those who feel more as Englishmen than as Churchmen, and more (may we say it) as philosophers than as religionists, will exult in reflecting upon the proof which English dissent exhibits of the liberality and of the generous elastic sentiment that belong to the national character. If any attribute these great pecuniary efforts mainly, or in any great proportion, to the impulse of a factious zeal, they are utterly uninformed of facts, as well as miserably splenetic. The church fund, raised yearly by the Dissenters of all classes, sheds a splendour upon

Britain brighter than the glitter of her arms: heaven thinks it so, even if earth has no eye to see it.

Or, to look beyond the circle of dissent, the voluntary contributions raised in this country for religious and benevolent purposes, by the middle and lower classes, chiefly, may well fill every patriotic breast with the warmest emotions of pleasure. Who is so cramped by sectarian jealousies—who is so misanthropic—who so cold to the glory of his country, as not to exult in what the heavily-burdened people of England have been doing during the past thirty years, and are doing, with unabated generosity? No such mighty river of charity has before rolled upon earth's surface; and it swells every year: if hemmed in or diminished for a moment, it bursts its banks anon, and deepens its channel. Before God we do not glory; for we still do less than is our duty: but before men—before all other nations, we may modestly say, "Copy the pattern we set."

If there are those among us who allow themselves to speak and think with contempt of the generous religious enterprises and the noble contributions of our several Christian communities, let them only transport themselves in idea to a distant futurity, and consider in what light this large religious benevolence will appear to posterity. The men of that future time may be vastly more munificent than ourselves; but certainly they will not forget us, their predecessors,

who have broke a path upon this field of noble and expansive good-will. It is we who have shown what kindly force there is in human nature when warmed by Christianity: it is we who have successfully made the economic experiment which proves that, let taxation reach what height it may, and let commercial perplexity lour over a people as it may, neither the one nor the other, nor both in conjunction, can repress the elasticity of Christian benevolence. It is we who have given a lesson of arithmetic to the world that will never be forgotten—a new calculus, that will solve all problems of charity.

Should it be attempted to deduct from this praise, on the ground of what some may deem the injudicious direction that has been given to our zeal in certain instances; we reply, that this is to forget the substance in the circumstance; for what is the chaff to the wheat? Even if our enterprises had been all fruitless, they were not the less great in conception, or sincere in intention. But they have been successful; and thousands have blessed England, and her missionaries. Nay, if any portion of our praise is set off because our success has not been greater, we claim it back again, as due to us on another plea; inasmuch as slender success enhances the merit of perseverance, if the end be good. There were Greeks in the age of Themistocles who had no eye, or ear, or heart, for the glory of their country, when liberty and civilization

were saved at Thermopylæ—Bœotians, born on the soil of Greece, but destitute of its soul. Are there English who can fret in sectarian vexation while their warm-hearted countrymen are, with a costly zeal, diffusing liberty, and civilization, and truth, over the world?

These happy and pregnant impulses, then, are not to be repressed, but encouraged; and are not to be regarded with jealousy, but with hopeful exultation. Yet we must not so doat upon the voluntary principle as to forget common sense, or to think it applicable to every thing. No ambiguity, in fact, attaches to the course we should pursue; for, while the freest scope should be given to popular liberality, and, while it should be invited to occupy as large a field as it will; we are unquestionably bound to hold entire those more steady resources, actually existing, the place of which the voluntary principle is not ready to supply, or for the supplying of which it does not seem well adapted.

The question of coercive measures, and of fiscal enactments, as opposed to the spontaneous exertions of the people, presents nearly the same conditions, to whatever class of public services it relates. Few of the institutions by which social order is maintained might not be dispensed with if mankind generally were good, just, and consistently reasonable. What so easy or simple as the business of government, if virtue

and moderation were prevalent? Instances have occurred, and others may readily be imagined, in which generous and patriotic sentiments, strongly excited by peculiar circumstances, have, for a time at least, superseded the ordinary provisions of government, and have remanded its compulsory forces. Nothing absolutely forbids our looking forward to an age when prisons shall crumble into ruin, the military art be forgotten, the tax-gatherer lose his office, and the small residue of public expenditure be amply and securely provided for by the unprompted offerings of the people.

None could deplore such a change, or regret the good old times of the sword and the chain. The voluntary principle, fully expanded, and permanently brought into action, would leave nothing to be wished for in our social condition, and little to be done by senates, councils, or kings. Towards so happy a state let us tend; but tend prudently. Need it be said that prudence does not allow the actual development of the spontaneous principle to be in any case anticipated, or the existing mechanism of government, with its coercive provisions, to be taken down, until after it has become conspicuous and unquestionable that they are no longer necessary. Meanwhile, we must endure law and its sanctions.

Nevertheless, long before the age of universal wisdom and virtue arrives, there may be small circles within which the substitution of what is

voluntary for what is compulsory, may safely and advantageously take place. Indeed there are services and functions of so peculiar a sort that they must be discharged voluntarily, or not at all. Most of the labours of charity are of this kind; and, at a first glance, it would appear that the offices of religion pre-eminently ask to come under the operation of the freest sentiments, and must wholly exclude whatever is not in the highest sense generous and elevated. But in this, as in so many instances, theory fails to be borne out by experience; and we are compelled to admit that the infirmity of human nature, the many inconsistencies that attach to our opinions and our conduct, and the waywardness and vehemence of the passions, render necessary certain modes of proceeding, such as our previous speculative notions would never have suggested.

The maintenance of the ministers of religion we assume to be a case in which experience and history give their vote against those lofty schemes which we might have wished to entertain. Or taking the argument on the lowest ground, we must at the least affirm that, where a legal provision for the clergy actually exists, and has long existed, the voluntary system, which never yet has been seen to cover any country with the means of religious instruction, and which is apt not to work favourably, cannot be allowed to break up that provision.

Those who are always appealing to the efficacy of the voluntary principle in the first ages of the Church, should take care to be informed of the actual arrangements under which it took place. The pecuniary position of Christian ministers during the first three centuries was, in its essential points, and in its indirect influence over priests as well as people, as unlike to the one, as it is to the other of the two modes of clerical maintenance that prevail in this country. If the system of tithes, and the legal enforcement of a definite impost was then unknown; so likewise was the direct dependence of single ministers upon the will, taste, and opinion of single congregations. No such contempt of the sacred office was ever thought of as is involved in the raising of a stipend for the support of a particular teacher, elected by the contributors, and removable at their pleasure. Submission to terms so humiliating was never asked of primitive pastors or teachers; and wherever it is yielded to, nothing less than a high rate of personal character suffices to secure a necessary pastoral authority, or to preserve the integrity of Christian doctrine and morals.

On the other hand, if a clerical body draws its support from a legal provision, and is exempted from pecuniary solicitude, and from immediate dependence upon the people, it is manifest that there is needed, and every well-informed and unprejudiced mind will instantly

admit it, some strong corrective influence, some efficient counterpoise, such as shall check the advance of a secular spirit, and disturb the drowsiness of worldly tempers. A body of clergy, at once exonerated of all solicitude, removed from all dependence, and at the same time sheltered from the salutary operation of public opinion, or at least so shielded as to save the inert and negligent from real alarms, such a body, we say, wants a stay to its virtue which human nature may not safely dispense with. Ministers of religion so seated under the hedge, may look down upon others, beating the waves, and bless their happier lot; but all such boasting is vain; the congratulation of those who are at ease is often, and assuredly it is so in this instance, a fatal delusion. To rejoice that we are free from every invigorating excitement, and to be glad that we are not permitted to breathe the open fresh air, is the pitiable solace of a crazed hypochondriac.

The Christian ministry, let us remember, may forfeit its dignity and its efficiency in more modes than one; and if cashiered of its due influence and honour by subserviency to democratic insolence; on the other side, it surrenders its vital power when what is spiritual, divine, immortal, is treacherously bartered for what is temporal and earthly.

People and priest ought to be connected by some sort of effective reciprocity: let not the priest be the slave of the people; nor stand in

an obsequious relation to a few individuals; nevertheless, both parties should feel that there is vitality in the bond of their union. But we here touch upon matters that must be more distinctly referred to in a fitter place. It must now suffice to say that, in consenting to the absolute exclusion of the mass of the people from every kind of control over church affairs, the clergy inflict upon themselves a more serious injury, if it be possible, than that which is sustained by their flocks. The clergy will regain a genuine influence on the same day on which the people are restored to their natural rights, and their christian privileges. In truth, both clergy and people are the victims, in our English Establishment, of LAY USURPATIONS, prescriptive indeed, and DEAR TO A FEW, but such as must admit correction if they are not to work its ruin.

We have thus briefly presented to view the four main conditions that affect the power of hierarchies; namely, the quality of the religion, the national temperament of the people, the political position of the clergy in the state, and the source of church revenues. Spiritual despotism, to reach its utmost height, must be favoured by each of these conditions; that is to say, the religion which is the vehicle of it must be fraught with superstition—the people must have sunk into a servile and sluggish humour—the Church must have got the better of the civil power, and the wealth of the country must, with-

out regulation or control, be at the command of the clergy. Spiritual despotism is necessarily redressed, or excluded—when theology is reformed —when learning and commerce restore intelligence and liberty to the people—when the civil authority resumes its functions and rights, a friendly reciprocity being established between Church and State; and lastly, when the nice matter of revenue is well defined, and is set clear of the opposite liabilities to disorder that affect it.

But there are evils that attend the reaction by which spiritual despotisms are overthrown. These take place—when the dread of church power, and the jealous resistance of spiritual encroachments, lead to a rejection, or a virtual exclusion of those potent principles that impart to religion its practical efficiency, and that invest it with a solemn and serious dignity;—when the growth of popular sentiments, and the republican feeling, operates to withhold from the clergy so much independent authority as is indispensible to the faithful discharge of their duties;—when the magistrate, in his caution against the insidious advances of clerical ambition, holds the Church in subserviency to his immediate pleasure, and gives it no leave to exercise its proper legislative and administrative functions; and lastly, when the rapacity of Churchmen is guarded against in either of those extreme methods of which the one tightens too much the dependence of the clergy upon their flocks, and the other snaps it.

SECTION III.

SKETCH OF ANCIENT HIERARCHIES, AND THAT OF THE JEWS.

THE general subject of sacerdotal power, and the abuses to which it is liable, cannot be treated with reference merely to modern institutions, modern notions, and immediate interests. Neither the guiding principles which we have to seek for in the New Testament, nor the real import of the allusions made therein to the constitutions of the primitive Church, can be understood without some knowledge of the notions and usages of the times; and these involve, not merely Jewish but heathen opinions and practices. One cannot read a page of the ecclesiastical controversies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries without feeling that the reasoning, on both sides, is very often vitiated, either by the want of this sort of information, or by the misuse of it.

A just conception of the Jewish church polity is, we say, indispensible to an understanding of the polity of the Christian Church; and the former demands at least a hasty glance at the contemporary pagan systems.

Our modern European institutions, civil as well as sacred, combine heterogeneous materials, of various and accidental origin, and often not so much composed, as jumbled together by the revolutions of ages. On the contrary, the ancient oriental polities suggest the idea of homogeneous abstract conceptions, the products of single minds, or of a few minds in concert. The former are accumulations, in the rearing of which the hand of time is more apparent than the mind or purpose of man: but the latter are, or seem to be, digested schemes, whereof the several components stand rationally related one to the other. Might it be said that the freedom of Europe has sprung, in part at least, from the *accidental* construction of our social systems; while the despotism of Asia has been the fruit (to some extent) of the creative purpose of primeval autocrats?

Those vast Asiatic structures, some of which have weathered the storms of four thousand years, one must believe to have been planned by comprehensive minds, and moulded by hands strong enough to depress or ennoble, at pleasure, the several classes of the community. This controlling power appears in some instances to have been guided by motives of religion, and in others to have been drawn from the resources of secular authority. In truth the oriental governments might well enough be classified according as they seem to have sprung from the will of the

soldier, the sage, or the priest. Whenever the latter was the founder of the state, every thing is made to bear upon sacerdotal prerogative and dignity: the nation exists for its priests; not the priests for the nation: religion, and it must be a religion of the darkest colours, is the one reason of every law and usage. The land is the property of the gods; the people are the slaves of the gods; and the priests are the vicegerents of every kind of authority, and the only absolute possessors of the goods of life; every title except theirs is precarious and conditional. Such seems to have been the idea of the primitive Egyptian polity. We should bear this in mind when we contemplate the Mosaic institutions. The papacy, at the height of its pride, went near to realize the same conception: it was the ideal which the Church placed before her, and toward which she pressed.

But happily there is a weakness inherent in this sort of sacerdotal system. A polity founded upon religious dogmas does not fail to generate schisms; then the prince, or the soldier, steps forward, cheerfully supported by the least fanatical portion of the people, to arbitrate between the pope and the orthodoxy of Memphis, and the pope and the heterodoxy of Thebes. The sacerdotal power once broken by division is never restored; the natural equilibrium of society returns with force; and the priests thenceforward are left in possession of their bare

mummeries and their indolence. Yet the triumphant prince, in thus gaining the mastery over superstition, still keeps it in credit as a necessary prop of his own authority. This seems to have been the course of events in ancient Egypt.

The social structure of India was better devised than that of Egypt; and in fact it has been immortal. The Brahminical, like the Egyptian institutions, must have been framed by and for the sacerdotal order; but with more skill and moderation. Whatever might be the relative proportion between priests and people in India and in Egypt, in this latter the undistinguished many stood together opposed to the privileged few; but in the other, the mass, being distinctly severed into portions, was internally balanced, part against part; and the sacred caste appeared rather as a mediator among the rest, than as the obnoxious and exclusive possessors of every dignity. The lowest caste looked to the one next above it, rather than to the highest, with malign impatience; and the two intermediate orders, having each its prerogatives to defend against a lower, would naturally sustain the highest as its protector. The Egyptian hierarchy was raised aloft as if on the top of an obelisk; that obelisk received a shock, and fell; but the wary Brahmin took his station on the summit of a broad based pyramid, and there he has securely reposed while every thing else mundane has been upturned.

It is in Thibet that the idea of a hierocracy has been realized in the most complete manner. When the Romanist compares his own system with this, between which and his own the resemblance is too remarkable to escape notice, he feels how much that Asiatic despotism has the advantage over the European. For example, the one has had to deal only with the inert and stupid Mongul and Tartar, while the other has been contending against the native spirit and energy of the western nations. Again, the religion of Thibet has commanded, without control, the boundless resources of error; but the bane of the Romish Church, and the occasion of most of its difficulties and its dangers, has been its connexion with Christianity, and its possession of books of acknowledged authority, which could neither be destroyed, concealed, nor so interpreted as to consist with its doctrines and practices. The Grand Lama has slept upon his sofa, while his brother of Rome has been racked with anxieties in repressing heresy after heresy. Once more, by boldly assuming the doctrine of an actual indwelling of the divinity in the person of the sovereign pontiff, and by keeping him close in his closet, and sealing his lips, the religion of Thibet has secured a far more profound submission and reverence from its votaries than could be challenged by the mere Vicar of God.

China and Thibet stand opposed as extreme instances, in matters of religion: in the former

the secular spirit has gained the ascendency, and religion is a mere appendage to the machinery of government. All that is vital in the religion of China is embodied in that sentiment of which the emperor is the object, as the father of his people.

Druidism passed away, not only because it occupied a soil destined to civilization; but because it brought sanguinary rites into northern latitudes, where life bears a far higher value than it does within the tropics, and where cruelties are therefore so much the more horrible. The religion of the umbrageous wilderness could not but disappear very soon after industry had begun to trench upon the skirts of the forest; and the axe that admitted the light of the sun into sacred glooms frightened away the murky divinity that had brooded in the shade. Druidism took shelter under an oak, where it could make no stand when the force of opinion failed it; but Brahminism—its parent, chose its home in palaces of marble, and in temples that served it as fortresses.

But we do not reach the ground of rational comparison with things related to ourselves until we come to those regions where genuine civilization has taken root. Judaism excepted, nothing Asiatic carries an inference practically applicable to our European and modern interests.

Although the early history of Greece presents particular instances of what has been called

codification; or the entire modelling of the social elements at a certain time, and by certain persons, yet the Grecian politics and manners and religious system, taken at large, were (like those of modern Europe) a various product of very many accidental causes, modifying the intellectual and moral character of the race. This race was far too active and masculine in its temperament to yield itself to the plastic hand either of sage or priest, in any such manner as took place among the Asiatic nations. The Greeks, especially in the times preceding the Peloponnesian war, were eminently a religious people: their religion entered into every part of the economy of life, private and public: nevertheless it did not place a despotic power in the hands of the sacerdotal order. The religion was not devised or imposed for the sake of the priests, or with any view to their advantage;—they were its ministers, not its masters. On all occasions the religion was more regarded than the priests: the people preserved that sincere homage which they paid to the gods, quite clear of any cringing to the interpreters and servants of the divinity. The priests—and this is a most important circumstance, were not all in all, as mediators between heaven and earth; for their functions might be discharged by others without sacrilege: the doctrine of an incommunicable sacredness, and an inviolable prerogative was not admitted. On emergencies,

at least, the highest offices of piety were performed by chiefs and princes; and thus the chord of spiritual despotism was cut.

If we look to the period previous to the diffusion of a sophistical and sophisticating philosophy, and while genuine sentiments were still prevalent in the higher as well as the lower classes, we shall find that, though the priestly order performed duties highly thought of, and were themselves respected for the sake of their office, yet the due performance of those duties was not held to demand any very eminent personal qualities or talents; or, at any rate, not those particular accomplishments or virtues which were the objects either of popular admiration or of philosophic esteem. For examples of patriotic magnanimity and self-denying probity the people did not look to their priests, any more than they did to their gods: for this purpose their eye was directed not to the temple, but to the senate or the field. Then, so far as religion was considered in connexion with abstract truth, it belonged altogether to the province not of the priest, but of the sage: the servants of the gods were the last men that were supposed to hold any commerce with great and sublime principles, or with the precepts of universal morality. Again; the education of youth was entrusted not to them, but to the professors of secular arts—rhetoric and gymnastics. Even

for fresh and animating impressions of the ideality and the poetry of their religion, it was not to the ministers of religion, but to their poets, dramatists, sculptors, and painters, that the Greeks had recourse. And, to sum up all, that personal sanctity which the ministers of the gods were expected to possess, was by no means a quality analogous to the virtues of common life: it was not a perfection of the same order; nor could it secure the regards of those among the people who aspired to goodness, temperance, and justice. The sanctity of the priest, even when allowed to be faultless, could not recommend itself as exemplary; or it was exemplary only within the precincts of the temple. This holiness was symbolical rather than positive; and it conferred upon its possessors a distinction neither envied nor sought after. As the young and emulous Greek would far rather have shone in glittering arms and armour than clothe himself, if he could, in the twinkling splendour of the stars, so would he choose any praise sooner than covet the mortifying purity of the ministers of heaven.

Sacerdotal power has ordinarily hinged upon two functions of interpretation—namely, that of sacred books, and that of futurity. But the Greeks had no ancient canonical writings; no written rule of belief and duty. They were indeed intensely curious of futurity, and

this passion, among no people more eager or universal, was largely provided for by the numerous oracular institutions of the mother country, and of hellenic Asia. Yet even in this instance the influence which might have accrued to the priests was much curtailed: first, by the opinion that the priests and priestesses of the oracular temples were nothing more than involuntary subjects of the divine inflation; and secondly, by the generally divulged secret of the corrupt obsequiousness of the oracle to the will of statesmen on special occasions. Much scepticism attempered the popular infatuation on this subject; and the luckless priest, whenever a tampering with him was detected or supposed, sustained the whole of the obloquy, which in justice should have been shared by the chief who was the author of the sacrilege, and by the god who connived at it.

The sacerdotal order, among the Greeks, although thus circumscribed and shut out from the possibility of effecting spiritual usurpations, was neither trampled upon, nor exposed to humiliations and difficulties of that sort which drives it to pervert religion for base and selfish purposes. The priests received a sufficient maintenance; and in a manner neither precarious to themselves, nor vexatious to the people.

What has been said of the Grecian worship and priesthood, is, with some modifications,

applicable to the Roman. The religion was substantially the same, though more serious and stern, and more barbaric, and far less fraught with beauty and poetry. If the greater gravity and intentness of the people, and the strength and depth of their passions, might seem to render them more fit subjects of ghostly influence than were the Greeks, yet the greater energy of the race, their eminent good sense, and constant attachment to certain fixed principles of political expediency, fully counterpoised any dispositions which the ministers of religion might have turned to their advantage. It was in conformity with the spirit of the political and military economy of the Roman state, that the chief magistrate was head of the Church (if we may borrow the phrase). This arrangement effectively excludes spiritual despotism; at least in its indefinite advances, if not always in its single proceedings.

Yet it must be vain to look for an auspicious sacerdotal institute where there are few elements of truth in the religion of a people; on the other hand, if in any quarter we meet with such an institute, we ought to hold its existence as a strong presumptive proof of the excellence and genuineness of the religion. A full exhibition, in all its bearings, of the Mosaic hierarchy, and a fair comparison of it with the several contemporary religious polities of the nations, would yield an argument in favour of the divine lega-

tion of the Jewish legislator, not easily overthrown. Such an argument, however, is not to be condensed within a narrow compass. Our present subject demands only a brief notice of some main particulars.

The fallacious and absurd use that has been made of the instance of the Jewish hierarchy in the controversy on church government, stands in the way of a legitimate and profitable appeal to it. We must endeavour to forget, as well the unsound argument of the upholders of high clerical pretensions, as the unsound reply to that argument, while we contemplate what surely must at all times be an edifying object—namely, a national religious polity, springing direct from Infinite wisdom and beneficence. Grant that an institution, established for a special purpose, and in a particular country, must not be taken as a model for analogous institutions in other ages and countries; yet, assuredly, a divinely originated economy must be held to involve, at the least, some few universal principles, convertible, with due modification, to other instances. It will be strange indeed if a combination of religious and secular elements, moulded by the very hand of God, should be found to yield to our modern eyes no instruction, or none of practical import. Far from admitting so irreverent a supposition, we should boldly advance the principle that, the Mosaic sacerdotal institute, stripped of whatever was special and temporary, and reduced to its

pure ideal, or abstract value, would furnish the best possible groundwork of a national religious polity; and it may readily be shewn, that no permanent or universal rule of the Christian dispensation prohibits the use it might seem expedient to make of such a pattern.

It is not easy to form an adequate conception of the happy aspect and actual beneficial operation of the Mosaic sacerdotal institute. In truth, all our notions of the Jewish commonwealth are received under a disadvantage, from the circumstance of their reaching us through the channel of inspired history. The inflexible integrity of the record, and its comminative intention, throws a dark colour over the general scene. If we knew nothing more of a man than what we might gather from the lips of his severe friend and admonitor, we might think some of the most virtuous of mankind to be the most faulty and unamiable. In reading the history of other nations, we see the things of the world in the world's light; but Jewish affairs we look at in the light of heaven; and what otherwise might appear fair, stands forward only as reprehensible.

Not one of the Jewish writers, whether historian or prophet, is the eulogist of his nation, or speaks of Israel as the Greeks of Greece, or the Romans of Rome. How different would be our impressions of the ancient people of Palestine, if some candid Herodotus had left us a description

of them, such as they must have appeared to a stranger in the bright era of their history, and when compared with their immediate neighbours. There is good reason to believe that, for diffused enjoyment and personal liberty, for elevation of sentiment, and purity of manners, no contemporary nation could offer any such spectacle of popular felicity.

The extreme brevity of the inspired historians, and the prominence given by them to single incidents, operate to deprive us of what might be called our chronological consciousness; and we forget that, while running over a few chapters, we have traversed ages, and have leaped periods exceeding the duration of some mighty empires. Certain seasons of calamity excepted, the Jewish commonwealth rested on the soil, and diffused among a numerous people a large measure of such felicity as earth admits of, during a much longer track of time than has yet been granted to British greatness; and longer than can be claimed for the splendour of Grecian liberties and arts; and longer than was allowed to the foreign power of Rome. During at least seven hundred years, Palestine was probably richer in human happiness than any other spot upon earth has ever been.

Considered in their secular aspect, the characteristic principle of the Mosaic Institutions was the private good of the people. Whatever the form of the polity might be, the spirit of

it was, in the best sense, popular; since the security, the competence, and the personal dignity, and the enjoyments of every son of Abraham was the ruling intention of every enactment. Redeemed from the furnaces of Egypt, and led into a land flowing with milk and honey, the economy of social life was so constructed as to yield the greatest possible amount of plenty and pleasure to every citizen. Every man who had sprung from the loins of Abraham was noble; and the forfeiture of that patrimony which enabled him to support the simple honours of his birth was a desperate calamity, guarded against by extraordinary provisions. The motto of the commonwealth was —'Every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree; none daring to make him afraid.' To eat the fat of the land, to make his heart merry with the wine, and to render praise to God, duty to the priest, and a generous portion to the fatherless, the widow, and the stranger, was the precept and privilege of all.

Neither national aggrandizement, or conquest and foreign empire, nor the accumulation of wealth by trade, nor the cultivation of arts and philosophy, was aimed at in the Jewish code; but rather the tranquil happiness and the domestic integrity of every Israelitish home. The Law was a blessing for the basket and the store, for the bed and the table. God's polity was like God's world, in the constitution of

which the greatest possible enjoyment of the greatest possible number is the sovereign rule. "Come and sit at my table, and taste of my dainties," was the invitation of Jehovah to the people of his choice; and if they had not perversely turned aside to snatch poisons from the tables of demons, no happiness would have been comparable to theirs.

In harmony with this scheme of beneficence, the sacerdotal institute had altogether a benign aspect toward the people. The priests, themselves secured of competency, and curtailed of no natural enjoyment, had no motive, either for grudging the happiness of others, or for trenching upon the common liberties: on the contrary, their own wealth and ease expressed, and flowed from, the prosperity of the state. Among the Asiatic hierarchies, that of the Jews occupied a middle ground; for it was neither predominant nor degraded: the nation did not exist for the priests; nor were the priests the obsequious dependents, either of the monarch or the people.

In considering the position and influence of the sacerdotal order in the Hebrew polity, we have, in the first place, to take notice of the character of the religion entrusted to its care, which afforded fewer means of sustaining ghostly power than perhaps any other system, ancient or modern. No scheme of belief and worship has drawn so little upon the undefined terrors of the invisible world; none has said less of

futurity—an extra-mundane futurity. The views it opens, the motives it urges, the hopes it awakens, the fears it instils, are all terrestrial and temporary. Whatever the Jewish nation might surmise or know concerning a future life, and an unseen economy, their laws and their worship did not rest upon any such foundation; and their priests, as such, were not empowered to wield the terrible weapons of spiritual excitement. The priests did not stand before the people as the privileged holders of impenetrable and portentous mysteries, of which it was at their discretion to deal out a portion or not. The clergy possessed no immeasurable superiority of knowledge over the laity: what the priests knew, the people might know, and ought to know from the priest. The one party did not grasp the immortal destinies of the other. The priest might adjudge to death, but not to perdition; and to death only in cases well defined.

Moses spoke of the Almighty as the Creator and Governor of the visible world; as the Giver of all good things; as the righteous administrator of human affairs, immediately rewarding those who fear Him and keep his commandments, and as punishing the refractory, either on the spot, or in the persons of their posterity. Every thing was marked out, circumscribed, and fixed in their theology; and therefore it was an unfit material of spiritual despotism.

Nor should we fail to notice the singular fact, that the prescience of future mundane events, a pretence to which has been so mighty an engine of priestly power, was (so far as granted at all) conveyed through the instrumentality of an extra-sacerdotal class, namely, that of the prophets, who were indiscriminately of every tribe, and who, even when of Levitical origin, derived none of their special authority from the hands of the superiors of their own order.

On insufficient grounds, and without staying to consider actual facts, divines have affirmed, what infidels have eagerly caught at, and are still repeating now the hundredth time—namely, that the religion of the Jews was severe and gloomy. Severe it could not be, when temporal felicity was constantly held up before the people as their portion, and as the immediate fruit of obedience. Severe it was not, while the divine placability was proclaimed in every rite, and while propitiation was the grand purpose of all worship. Gloomy it could not be, abstaining as it did from the terrors of the unseen world: yes, but it was gloomy, as the silvery dawn is gloomy when we think of its shadows in comparison with the splendours of noon.

Never has there been a religion, ancient or modern, under which a man might on easier terms live piously and happily. No religion has afforded so few excitements to vague despondency. If it has been a not infrequent

case for melancholic minds to be seized with the frenzy of religious despair, we doubt if ever such an instance occurred under primitive Judaism. It was only when he entertained the horror-fraught demonology of the Canaanitish tribes, that the son of Abraham could become the victim of moody terrors. This Judaism then was not the system on which to build spiritual despotism.

Nor did the national temperament favour any such usurpations. If we call the Jews—Orientals, we must first exclude from the term the notions usually attached to it, of indolent laxity, or of a cringing servility of disposition. In reading the historical books of the Old Testament, commencing with the book of Judges, one gathers from the whole an impression of a people high spirited and impassioned; yet sedate and firm; dignified in manners, vigorous in action, steady in purpose, rich in axiomatic good sense, and terse in expression; and especially warm and true in domestic sentiment, and keen in every feeling of honour. They took to themselves a monarchical government; but their usages were democratic; they bore the burden of kingly rule, till it reached a galling weight, and then the cry was always, "To your tents, O Israel." The antebabylonish Jews were not the plastic stuff an ambitious hierarch would have chosen to work upon.

The position of the Jewish priesthood in

relation to the community, and in relation to the civil authority, deserves especial regard.

A main circumstance to be set off, in taking account of the duties, dignities, political influence, and revenues, of the Levitical tribe, is that combination of functions, civil and sacred, which they sustained. The priests and Levites were not ministers of religion merely. Besides discharging the various and very laborious services of public worship, and besides imparting religious instruction to the mass of the people; the sacerdotal, and semi-sacerdotal orders, performed the duty of an armed force, or garrison of the temple, and of a body-guard to the monarch. Upon them also, or upon them chiefly, devolved the administration and interpretation of civil and criminal law, and the business of courts of justice. Moreover, as it seems, the priests were originally the professors of medicine, and, from a natural extension of the delicate offices entrusted to them in several medico-judicial instances, were compelled to acquire a kind of knowledge which none can possess and remain idle. The priests too, were the only depositaries of general learning, and the copiers of books. Now if the exercise of so many functions might appear to place vast power in the hands of a single order, it will be found, in the actual working of the social machine, that this very multiplicity of labours, and this intimate blending of the priests with

the people, in all the occasions of common life, operates much more to break down and moderate, than to build up and aggravate ghostly tyranny. The common people have never been so thoroughly enslaved by any priests as by those who affected an utter ignorance of all mundane affairs, and who spent, or professed to spend, their days and nights in seraphic abstraction. The people should not then look with too much jealousy at those engagements which make their ministers one with themselves, and which withdraw them a little from the closet and the conclave.

In calculating, therefore, the proportion borne by the priests and Levites to the community, or the amount of their revenues, we must not think of either as we should if nothing more had been required of them than to give attendance at the altar. Take what example we please, of a civilized community, and reckon all the learned professions in a mass, not omitting the ministers of state, and the guards of the palace, and we shall find the number to exceed, in proportion, that of the Levitical tribe; and the aggregate revenues and salaries of all these professions, vastly to surpass those of the Jewish clergy. The entire instance fails then in applicability to the circumstances of any modern people. Nothing can be more preposterous than the argumentative use that has so often been made of the Mosaic institutions, in this particular.

Let a tenth of the rents and income of any community be taken, and shared among all the professions, the clergy taking only their proportion of this tithe, and then the procedure will bear some analogy to the Jewish tithe system.

No argumentative reference, moreover, to the Mosaic sacerdotal institute can fairly be made, until after we have set off the capital circumstance that the priesthood was hereditary, and therefore irrespective of personal qualities or qualifications (mere physical integrity excepted). None would pretend that, in the case of the Christian ministry, individual fitness for the office, together with all mental and moral dispositions, should be so merged as is implied in adapting the hereditary principle to the clerical order. This circumstance indicates some essential dissimilarity between the Jewish and Christian schemes; and should make us cautious in carrying inferences from the one economy to the other. Nevertheless this dissimilarity must not be thought of as if it involved a total want of analogy; for we ought to recollect that, as a wide circuit of various employments devolved upon the Levitical tribe, and the Aaronic family, there would naturally take place an allotment or distribution of offices, according to the talents and dispositions of individuals; the more intellectual and sedate assuming to themselves the duties of religious teachers, while the more active betook them-

selves to secular employments. To a certain extent therefore, it would still be true that the ministers of religion would be such, not merely by accident of birth, but by fitness of talent and temper; though certainly not in any case by popular election.

Allowance made for the two above-named peculiarities of the Jewish priesthood, the following main conditions attaching to it seem to deserve attention.—

The first of these conditions is the important one, that, under this divine economy the ministers of religion, as related to the people for whom they were to act on the part of God, and upon whom they were to enforce the law, stood absolutely independent of popular will and caprice, as well in regard to pecuniary support, as to appointment and removal. If there be something that is special and accidental in this arrangement, there is surely something of abstract principle in it also. The original justice of the tithe of produce, as an equivalent for a twelfth share of the land due to the tribe of Levi, does not affect the sort of inference which we deem it warrantable to draw from the fact. Used as *a rule of proportion*, applicable to the clergy in Christian countries, nothing (as we have already said) can be more absurd. This nugatory inference excluded, we yet seem borne out in assuming

that the abstract principle of a national establishment, involving a legal and defined provision for the ministers of religion, and securing also their independence of popular caprice, must not be spoken of as essentially immoral, or as universally inexpedient, and incompatible with those relative sentiments that should connect the pastor and his flock. When the difficulties that attend the general question of a provision for the clergy are felt, what can be more natural, on the part of religious minds, than to turn toward a heaven-descended economy; and if restrained by peculiar considerations from a close imitation of this pattern, it will be strange indeed if we do not grant it to be entitled to the smallest deference, while employed in working the abstract theorem of a church polity. But it may be predicted that this divine example will acquire a much higher authority than hitherto it has possessed, when, on the one hand, it shall cease to be any more distorted and abused in vindication of tithes, and of certain despotic church maxims; and, on the other hand, when the conceit which has been entertained, that the Christian system stands positively opposed to any such arrangement, shall be dissipated. It is surely a singular inconsistency on the part of some who, while sternly affirming the authority of Mosaic institutions in certain points, absolutely refuse permission to make any sort of use of the great principle of the Mosaic

59738

economy in relation to the ministers of religion. In all points ought we not alike to drop what is special in the Jewish polity, and to respect, and if practicable, to imitate, what appears to spring from some universal axiom?

Secondly. The independence and the competence of the Jewish priesthood being thus secured by an endowment of lands and towns, and by imposts, precisely defined, scope was yet given to the spontaneous affection of the people toward their teachers, and to their zeal also on special occasions, where no danger was to be expected, and where public spirit was likely to meet the demand made upon it. There was an annual gratuity to the priests, left to the liberality of the people; and such as might give excitement to pious regard toward them, and open the way for reciprocal feelings on the part of the clergy. But beside this, it was the usage of the Jewish Church, following the example first set by Moses, to appeal to the religious generosity of the nation whenever the house of God needed extensive repairs, or was to be re-edified. Without some such call upon the sentiments of devout patriotism, a people can hardly fail to become indifferent to religion, and to its public offices, which they do not feel to be in any active sense their own. We may well observe, in the instance before us, the just appreciation it implies of the ordinary impulses of human nature. When an object of visible

importance and happy aspect can be suddenly presented to the public mind, there is no need to be anxious for the result. A generous enthusiasm is sure to be enkindled, and will probably overpass the necessities of the occasion. So it was in repeated instances with the Jewish people. The erection or repair of sacred structures might, almost always, be confidently thrown upon voluntary contributions. The permanent support of those who are to minister within them involves greater difficulties.

Thirdly. A circumstance already adverted to is of so much importance as to demand more explicit mention: we mean that counterpoise of church influence which sprung from the operation of the Prophetic Function. It is the exclusive possession and the irresponsible control of all kinds of spiritual power which enables a hierarchy to digest its plans of encroachment, and to achieve gradual usurpations. No such exclusive domination was permitted to the Jewish clergy. An unfailing succession of inspired men, sometimes members of the Aaronic house, but more often not, stood up as the immediate ministers of Jehovah, dealing rebuke, with high intrepidity, on all sides; and assailing the vices or the remissness, as well of the priests, as of the princes, or the sovereign. The high-priest could never call himself the VICAR OF GOD, or the ultimate authority, from whose decisions there could be no appeal.

Whatever scheme of aggrandizement for his order an ambitious hierarch might meditate, he could never for a moment secure himself against the thundering reproof of some extra-sacerdotal voice, the pealing of which must have shattered his devices. This counterpoise, or rather corrective, forming as it did a permanent provision in the Jewish church polity, deserves to be especially noticed in its relation to the hereditary tenure of the pontifical dignity. Into what condition, short of an intolerable spiritual despotism, could any community fall, among whom there existed an hereditary pontificate, not checked in some very efficacious manner? Or how much power would be left to the civil magistrate who should sway his sceptre under the shade of an inherited prelacy? A pope, the lineal descendant of popes, and the progenitor of popes, would be a despot such as the world has never seen. In this sense it was well for Europe that the Romish clergy condemned themselves to celibacy. It is worthy of remark that, soon after the prophetic function failed among the Jews, the pontifical dignity ceased to descend from father to son; or even to be held for life.

Lastly, we have to take account of that balance of power, and that reciprocal corrective influence, which subsisted between the priesthood and the monarchy, in the Jewish state; each exerting over the other a control, bene-

ficial to each, and to the community. Beside their proper spiritual authority with the people, which naturally tempered the civil and military power, the priests and Levites were the aristocracy — the barons and the knights of the commonwealth. It was they who had an interest in the institutions of the country of a definite sort, and which impelled them to resist innovations and encroachments, whether attempted by the people or the monarch. A privileged order, accustomed to meet in convocation, becomes inevitably, whatever its particular functions may be, the guardian of the state, and the vigilant observer of all changes. Several actual instances are recorded, and others no doubt occurred, in which the constancy and patriotism of the priests saved the state, and barred the way of a tyrant.

On the other hand, the sacerdotal order itself stood in awe of the monarch; and on many remarkable occasions, received from his hand a vigorous treatment, necessary, and highly beneficial. The lapse of time never fails to break down the purity and integrity of a sacerdotal body. Secular motives insensibly supplant high principles; the earthly prevails over the heavenly element. But a hierarchy never reforms itself;—no corporation regenerates by spontaneous energy: it must be brought back to duty and virtue by a hand from without. No provision of the Mosaic law had authorised this

sort of reform; yet it had become the salutary usage of the state for strong-minded and pious sovereigns to do for the Church, what the Church will not do for herself, and what the people either do not care to attempt, or have no means of effecting. A main characteristic of Jewish history is CHURCH REFORM, again and again brought about by the civil power. And never are such reforms recorded otherwise than in terms of commendation; never are they reservedly mentioned, as happy, but illicit intrusions upon things sacred. The inspired writers do not seem to have come to the knowledge of the transcendant doctrine, that corruptions and abuses are sacred, or can ever deserve reverence.

Why the examples of David, Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, should not be regarded as imitable, as well as admirable, it is not easy to say. Our notions of wisdom and public virtue must surely be distorted when we deny that a monarch, alive to the highest interests of the state, and to the welfare of his people, acts laudably when he directs the public force against glaring church abuses, and calls upon the ministers of religion, in a tone they dare not slight, to amend their ways, to forsake covetousness, and to tend their flocks. Except for the piety and zeal of several kingly reformers, the Mosaic institutions, and with them the knowledge and worship of Jehovah, would in an early age have utterly disappeared.

Whatever practical use we may choose to make of this ancient model of ecclesiastical polity, we surely cannot refuse it our admiration. Or if its actual arrangements be adjudged altogether inapplicable to Christian countries in modern times, at least those general axioms upon which it was reared must deserve regard; for it is impossible to admit the divine origination of this scheme, and at the same time to affirm that its fundamental principles are out of harmony with human nature, and not in any sense capable of extension from one people and age to another. What then were these rudiments of the Jewish church polity? We assume that they may be reduced to the following articles, namely—The independence of the priests in relation to the people;—space and excitement for the sentiments of religious public spirit;—a partition of religious influence between the hierarchy and some other party; or, as interpreted into a modern sense, a perfect liberty of animadversion upon clerical conduct, exercised by persons not of the clerical order;—an effective independence of the clergy in relation to the civil power;—and lastly, a reciprocal authority in the magistrate, exercised over the Church on occasions of manifest necessity. We are bold to conjecture that an ecclesiastical polity founded upon these conditions would at once secure a just and necessary authority to the ministers of religion, and preclude spiritual usurpations; that it would contain

within itself the springs of periodic renovation, without which no system, how perfect soever in its original scheme, can float down the current of time; and that it would exert an effective and salutary influence, not merely like our present systems, over portions of the community; but over the whole; and would impart a religious character to public acts, both of the legislature and the administration.

During the ages that elapsed between the building of the second temple and its demolition, every thing in the Jewish state had shifted position. Six hundred years is a period that imparts a new character to all but the most inert masses. Judaism was not an inert mass, like the vast despotisms of Asia, nor did even the sanction of the Divine authority preserve it from change. Whatever has life has eras and evolutions. Even Christianity has exhibited, and will probably yet exhibit, this symptom of vitality.

Passing over at a leap the gradual induction of political, ecclesiastical, and moral changes, we find firmly established among the Jews, in the time of Christ and his apostles, what well deserves the appellation of spiritual despotism. The common people superstitious, fanatical, scrupulous, licentious, were held in vilifying subservience to the arrogance, the rapacity, the factious interests, and the whims of their religious masters. The very people who preposterously affirm that

they had 'never been in bondage to any man,' were, at that moment, bowing down under the chains of a foreign domination, and the yoke of a ghostly tyranny.

Besides other evidences of the fact, which are abundant, we possess, on this point, the most explicit and unimpeachable testimony—that of our Lord. His vehement arraignment of the Jewish rulers conveys the very idea of spiritual despotism. The benign law of God was set aside by vain superstitions and profligate expositions:—a boundless homage was claimed from the populace by their teachers; the rapacity and debauchery of the ministers of religion were cloaked by frivolous austerities: intolerable burdens were imposed upon the people, and not shared by the imposers; and a state of fanatical excitement was kept up throughout the community, such as placed a formidable force at the command of the chiefs of the factions. Each of these particulars is distinctly affirmed, or is necessarily implied, in our Lord's impeachment of the scribes, lawyers, and priests; nor has ever a public reprover employed language more stern and reprobative. The Divine Speaker, in these instances, does not invite the hardened Pharisee to repentance; but consigns him to perdition: instead of that under-tone of mercy which pervades always his addresses to the profligate multitude, we hear only the thunders of the day of wrath. Well might it be, if whoever stands in the same place of elevated hypocrisy,

converting the solemnities of religion into a disguise for interested purposes, and employing the hand of heaven as an instrument of extortion, would take a timely warning from the terrible denunciation pronounced upon these, their predecessors in sacrilege.

To trace the course of events which had conducted the Jewish people over so large an interval from the one condition to the other, would lead us very far. Briefly we may notice the main circumstances that appear to have distinguished the one from the other. They are such as the following.—

The ecclesiastical and civil authorities, instead of being amicably related and adjusted, one to the other, as parts of the same polity, had become severed, in consequence of the subjugation of the country; and not only severed, but placed in jealous opposition; and each cherishing towards the other sentiments of profound, though repressed hatred. The natural alliance which should subsist in a religious community, between Church and State, and which had formerly subsisted, had given way to such correspondence as belongs to a truce between enemies. The foreign power, embarrassed by its inability to understand the principles or the temper of the sanctimonious yet profligate hierarchy it had to do with, and justly holding in contempt men who, while professing a purer religion than that of their neighbours, surpassed all

people in atrocity, could not wish to interfere when they saw the priests and rabbis spending their malignity upon the luckless multitude.

On the other side, the religious chiefs, liable to humiliations of national pride, insufferable if it had been possible to avoid them, sought the relief of revenge by trampling upon the people; and yet at the same time flattered the worst passions of the populace by dealing out to them an immoral casuistry, as the means of securing and extending their own precarious power. The doctors and priests stood in that very position of hostility toward the magistrate, and of uncertain dependance upon the caprices of popular feeling which afterwards corrupted the Christian ministry, and which has proved its ill consequence in the instance of some modern clerical bodies. The supremacy of the chiefs was on every side in danger; and their behaviour naturally exhibited that anxious intolerance, and irritation, which are always the characteristics of unstable power. In the primitive times of Judaism, the sacerdotal, the prophetic, and the kingly authorities, counterpoised each other; but now, the prophetic being gone, and the kingly exchanged for a foreign and idolatrous power, the sacerdotal body—rabbis, priests, lawyers, scribes, were in all religious matters, that is to say, in every affair beneath the notice of the Roman governor, or not cognizable by him, irresponsible and absolute; and free to convert the malign

religious sentiments of the nation to the worst purposes.

A special circumstance of the ecclesiastical condition of the Jews, at the time now spoken of, was this, that a principal portion of the religious influence and spiritual magistracy had been usurped, or at least had insensibly passed into the hands of an irregular order of men, who exercised an authority not known either to the Mosaic code, or to the antebabylonish polity. Whether these men drew revenues from the gratuities of the people is not clear; but it is certain that they enjoyed a large share of all such honours and powers as the blind obsequiousness of the vulgar can confer. The chiefs of the Pharisaic sect — and this sect commanded the popular mind, constituted an irresponsible and anomalous body, the influence of which, not springing from any definite or legal provisions, was built up and maintained by the practice of those unworthy arts to which despotic demagogues naturally have recourse. And it is especially to be noticed that this self-constituted spiritual aristocracy did not act (as it might perhaps have done beneficially) in the way of a counterpoise to the hierarchy; but seems to have purchased its lawless authority by lending support to the priests in all their machinations. A confederacy very similar in its elements, and of which the people were the victims, afterwards took place in the Christian

Church, between the parochial clergy and bishops, and the monkish orders. For although, in later ages, and on particular occasions, the two parties were openly opposed, there was a long period during which the ascetic bands played one and the same game with the secular clergy, and both concurred in trampling upon those whom they were pleased to designate the herd of mankind. It has always been found, as well within the Jewish as the Christian church, that such volunteers in the spiritual warfare have outstripped the main body in every enterprise of spoliation and extravagance. Better is it always to be lawfully, than unlawfully oppressed.

Again: the ancient priesthood enforced and taught the divine law in the vernacular tongue, and could find little room for perverse and sinister interpretations; but the expatriation of the people, and the consequent change in the national dialect, sealed the Pentateuch from the commonalty, and threw into the hands of the learned class an unlimited power of interpretation. But the power to interpret a code of law, without appeal, is essentially a legislative power; and when combined with the personal cure of souls, it becomes administrative also, and leaves hardly any thing to be added to the faculties of despotism. It was thus that the Romish hierarchy held the key of Scripture; first, as locked up in the Greek language, and after-

wards in the Latin. This binding and loosing of Moses by the Rabbi, was probably the main means of the corrupt tyranny of which the Jewish nation had become the victims. And it was thus, afterwards, in the Christian Church. An irresponsible right to interpret, is a right to enslave.

Once more: it must by no means be forgotten, that the Pharisaic Judaism of the times of Herod had gradually drawn to itself, or had insensibly developed, several powerful elements of belief, either not known to the people in the pristine ages, or not commonly divulged and spoken of. Esoteric doctrines naturally work themselves out, and get abroad in the lapse of time: what once was a mystery, whispered in sacred groves, comes at length into the mouth of the populace, and is heard every day in the streets of cities. The seeming deficiency in the Mosaic books (considered as embodying a system of theology) had been filled up—it is not easy to say from what sources; but in fact, the future life, and future retribution, formed a part of the popular creed, and afforded to the doctors and masters of the people an engine of terror, of which they availed themselves in their own manner.

Thus it was that the Judaism which Christianity came in to displace, differed in almost every thing but names, rites, and the visible part of worship, from the Judaism whereof David had gloried. The substance had fallen

away before the form was abrogated. This, indeed, is the ordinary process of revolution in matters of opinion. The substance moulders slowly and insensibly; and then the crust drops in an instant.

To sum up our comparison between the ecclesiastical polity and religious sentiment characteristic of the first temple and of the second, we may say, that the religion of the first was gracious, happy, and intelligible; that of the second (in later times) was superstitious, harsh, scrupulous, and immoral. The ministers of the first enjoyed a tranquil and well-defined competency, removing them at once from temptations and solicitudes; those of the second were, by the position in which they stood, at once the interested flatterers of the people and their cruel masters. During the continuance of the first temple, the several powers of the State moved on in amicable equipoise; but in the times of the second, the Church and the State had either no settled alliance or stood in jealous opposition.

During the pristine era, the Jewish people enjoyed a religion according to law; but during later ages, they were distracted by the uncertainties of religion according to opinion. The early faith and worship was a blessing for the people: the later was a benefit for the priest and the rabbi. The first was liberty and rule; the second despotism and license. The first was God's religion: the second man's.

SECTION IV.

RUDIMENTS OF CHURCH POLITY.

It is generally granted, that, in the Mosaic Institute there was something permanent, as well as much that was temporary; or rather, something universal, as well as a greater mass that was local and national. Few will deny that the converse is true of Christianity; for to insist upon the unchanging universality and the perpetual obligation of every particle of the religious economy left to the world by the apostles, is to plunge into difficulties, both historic and dogmatic, whence there can be no way of escape. It is true that certain communions have laboured to entrench themselves on this ground; but in doing so they have staked the entire authority of Christianity upon the determination of obscure antiquarian questions. Unless this ill-judged attempt is abandoned, no hope can be entertained of effecting the peace of the Church.

Judaism, although in fact it underwent extensive modifications in the course of ages, had no yielding property originally imparted to it;

because it was adapted to the particular spot where it was actually reared. But Christianity, because intended for all places and times, was left, so far as relates to its exterior forms and its social constitutions, in a plastic state. Its doctrine and its morality none can imagine to be variable, since they both spring from eternal truths. But this power of accommodation in things which, in their own nature are inconstant, places the Gospel of Christ in contrast with almost every other religious system; and affords too a forcible, though silent proof, of the comprehensive design of Him who gave it to the world. The ancient promise, that the Lord's Christ should inherit all nations, is symbolized in what may be called the applicable quality of the worship and polity which he consigned to his followers; for these adjuncts of his religion are so left at large as to admit of needful modifications. Christianity takes an elastic grasp of human nature: Judaism held it as the solid mould holds the metal that is poured into it.

Judaism is fifteen hundred years older than Christianity; and if the ordinary rule of the inverse amount of historic light, as we recede from our own times, held good in this instance, much less obscurity would attach to the circumstantials of the later, than to those of the more ancient institution. But the contrary is found to be the fact; nor can we be surprised that it is so, when we remember that the one was

a system of circumstantials, to each and all of which religious importance was attached: the other not so; for Christianity challenges the serious regards of men in those things only which conscience and reason confess to be momentous.

For the most part, it is easy to ascertain the usages of the tabernacle and temple worship, and the Jewish methods of ecclesiastical management. But nothing has been found more difficult than to determine satisfactorily what were the practices of the apostolic Churches, even in some of the main articles of discipline, government, or worship. This striking difference between the Jewish and the Christian economies speaks plainly enough, one might think, to common sense, and should have superseded many an interminable controversy. In relation to certain points of ritual or government, sound reason does not ask any thing more to be said than this—namely, That the primitive practice in such particulars, clearly is not clear; therefore our modern consciences may be relieved of all solicitude on the subject. Christianity is not a religion of immovable exterior constitutions; but of universal and unchangeable truths. Because universal in its essential principles, and universal too in its aspect, therefore plastic in its forms: variable in its exterior, because invariable in its substance.

Whatever, in the New Testament, relates to modes of worship, and to ecclesiastical constitutions, is couched in general terms. Moreover,

those allusions to matters of fact, whence the apostolic practice might be gathered, are slight and indistinct, and not seldom ambiguous. Our inference is plain.—Facts so obscurely conveyed must not be taken as if propounded to us authoritatively. It is not in any such form that LAW has ever been promulgated; no legislator has so tortured the ingenuity of a people. It is true that, in the lapse of ages, the phraseology of law may become first obsolete, and then questionable; but still there was a time when no obscurity attached to it. But that which never was formally and dogmatically expressed, and which, apart from the aid of traditionary knowledge, could not, even in an early age, have been precisely determined, we may boldly say was not intended as LAW, and can never be so employed without hurtfully entangling consciences, and confounding what is really important in morals with what is indifferent. To insist upon some supposed primitive usage, known to us only through a process of ambiguous inferences; and in so doing to trample upon the unchangeable and always intelligible rules of Christian charity, is to subvert reason and piety, and to leave no vital force in either.

God does not confer common sense upon mankind by miracle; nor did he put in movement the vast economy of revelation for the purpose of teaching that which may otherwise be known, or of giving decisions upon matters

to which human reason is fully competent. Our Lord's mode of popular instruction shows clearly what is supposed and expected on the part of man, in listening to divine teaching. He boldly expresses general principles in tropical terms; and these, such as convey either no moral meaning, or none that would not be trite, frivolous, or even pernicious, unless freely interpreted, as they were intended, by sound common sense. The literal version given of some of these instructions by the fanatic would indeed, if generally prevalent, turn the world upside down. Our Lord omits entirely those explanations, cautions, and limitations, which are superfluous where good sense is in exercise, and which must be unavailing where it is wanting.

The apostles, in like manner, not only appeal in particular instances to the good sense of their followers, but manifestly presuppose its competency to the management of religious, as well as of secular affairs. "I speak unto wise men; judge ye what I say." "Be not children in understanding." "Is there not a wise man among you?" Such is the style of those who were commissioned to guide mankind, not to enslave them. But despotism speaks a very different language; and it is its characteristic to leave no room for discretion: it will push law and precept into every corner of life, and obtrude specific directions where common reason and ordinary motives need no aid. Despotism

grudges to treat men as men; but must always deal with them either as children, or as wild beasts; it will always prescribe, and measure out every movement; it will pronounce upon the little as well as upon the great; and is not content unless it makes itself felt and heard every moment, and in every place. Christianity takes its station upon another ground, and is moved by another spirit. Nevertheless, we may make the Apostles despots, if we will thrust them into the iron chair of tyranny, and extort law from their lips, where in fact they have uttered no decree.

Christians, of every successive age, are solemnly enjoined to profess, to uphold, and to diffuse the Gospel. But the discharge of this arduous duty, in the amplitude of its meaning, involves many and various measures, adapted to the ever-changing occasions of human affairs, and of a sort not to be prescribed in a code, but which must spring from the intelligent zeal and discretion of those who successively steer the helm of the Church. Human sagacity and prudence (exalted and guided by heavenly wisdom) here find their field. Now, in saying that such and such courses of action belong to the sphere of reason, we virtually exclude them from the peculiar circle of revelation. Revelation comes in wherever revelation is needed; but it is not needed where the means and the end lie within the grasp of the human mind. God, who com-

mands us to employ the faculties he has given us, will not at the same time supersede their exercise: this were a glaring inconsistency. Whatever reason sanctions, in things appertaining to its domain, God virtually sanctions by the voice, at once, of natural and of supernatural theology.

On the ground then of these general principles, we readily evade the superstition of the zealot, on the one hand, who will hold no communion with us unless we understand, as he does, some ambiguous allusion to a matter of ritual or polity; and we reject, on the other hand, for the same reasons, the arrogance of the despot who desires to inflict penalties and to impose restraints upon those who do not acknowledge his right to legislate where Christ has promulgated no law. Furthermore, on the very same principles, we hold ourselves free to devise, nay, more than this, bound in duty to devise, and to carry into effect, whatever schemes or modes of procedure may appear proper for promoting or for upholding religious truth in the world, and for transmitting it to posterity; provided always, that such measures accord with the spirit of Christianity, and do not trench, either directly or remotely, upon any of its explicit injunctions. The duty, individually, of concurring with any such measures, and of yielding obedience to those who enforce them, must be referred to the broad principle which enjoins compliance with, and submission

to existing arrangements, wherever conscience is not invaded. To resist or obstruct public measures, without necessity, is always immoral.

But whatever is devised or decreed, within the Christian Church, or decreed concerning it, must comport with certain rudiments of polity and worship which are to be gathered from the New Testament, and which stand there either explicitly determined, or reasonably involved in unquestionable facts. What is most important of this kind may conveniently be brought under the following articles; the first of which relates to the duty of openly professing Christianity, and to the consequences of that profession; the second, to the exclusiveness of the Christian profession; the third, to the distribution of functions within the Church; the fourth, to the allotment of offices to individuals; the fifth, to those secular arrangements which this allotment makes necessary; the sixth, to the source or derivation of sacred offices; the seventh, to the counterpoise of the authority vested in the officers of the Church; and the eighth, to the gradations of rank among its officers, or to their relative position and respective spheres.

How much soever of learning and of dialectic ability may have been already expended upon the subjects involved in the above-named particulars, there may yet be room for a statement of them, in that light in which they appear to

common sense, when no interests of party, or prejudices of education are to be saved.

I. As matter of form, we must advance the preliminary axiom—That Christianity demands from its adherents, without exception or evasion, an open profession of their belief, and frequent public communication, one with another, as well for purposes of worship, as of mutual aid, instruction, and discipline. This we assume as granted; or as not standing in need of the induction of proof. Christianity is essentially social, and the public observances which it enjoins involve, by necessity, not merely a casual intercourse among its adherents; but some system of organization and government. We had need to bear it in mind that, as an incidental or occasional profession of our faith in Christ does not satisfy the obligations we are under as his disciples; so neither does accidental association, prompted by personal friendship merely, or by taste, fulfil the requirements of church communion.

This first axiom of church polity is properly insisted upon when we have to refute asceticism, and mystic or abstracted selfishness; whether in its ancient anchoretic garb, or in its modern guise of philosophic eclecticism; and this is an error not very unlikely at present to gain some prevalence. Refuted infidelity may probably take refuge in a mute admission of the truth

of Christianity. Again, the same principle stands opposed to the factious doctrine, which allows to every Christian the liberty to separate himself from his brethren on the pretext of his particular opinions, on any point of belief or ritual. Christ enjoins his disciples to assemble themselves together in his name; and his apostle explicitly forbids their parting into little companies, on the ground either of doubtful questions, or of attachment to individual teachers and leaders. Sectarism contradicts the first rudiment of Christian combination.

Moreover, a fair, and indeed an unavoidable extension of this same first article of church polity, involves the duty of carrying out the Christian social principle in every direction, and to the utmost extent to which it will go. If all Christians residing within a small circle or vicinage, are required to recognize each other as such, and to institute a public and visible communion, the Christians of a larger circle, as of a city, or of a district, cannot be excused from the same duty, so far as the conditions of that wider sphere may admit. While Christian communion within a small circle may be intimate and frequent, within a large circle it can only be of a more general sort; but the one is as much demanded as the other; and both the one and the other must be systematic and perpetual; not casual, loose, or merely spontaneous. Religious organization finds no reasonable

limit until it has spread itself out, from congregations to cities, from cities to provinces, from provinces to empires; nay, until the family of man shall present itself to the pleased eye of Heaven, in harmony and concert, as the one Household of Faith. COMBINATION is the law of Christ: insulation and disunion are essentially antichristian; nothing can more distinctly be antichristian; superstition is less so.

A national Church, well devised, and wisely administered, may be considered as nothing else than a reasonable expansion of the first rudiment of external Christianity; and as a virtual fulfilment of the command—'Forsake not the assembling of yourselves together.'

'II. Our first axiom, which is comprehensive in its aspect, demands to be attached to our second, which is restrictive. Christianity is the belief of certain alleged facts; and it is also a certain line of conduct, springing from the motives which those facts engender. But all men do not profess this faith; nor do all that profess it maintain a course of conduct such as must be reckoned necessary to the Christian character. The Gospel therefore, if its peculiarity and its power are to be preserved, brings in a distinction between man and man, even among those who, in no other sense, as members of society, are to be distinguished. Our alternative is either to lower Christianity, and to convert the Church

into a receptacle of impurity, or to adhere to some rule of discrimination; nor can we use any other rule than its own. The Church and the world must needs be parted, until the Church shall have embraced the world, and the world have yielded itself to the Church. Christianity is a comprehensive combination; but it is also a special one. A power of judgment and exclusion is therefore essential to the very existence of a Christian Church. It is an after question, in whose hands this power is to be lodged, and by what regulations it is to be circumscribed. The two opposite errors that are to be guarded against on this point are, first, that of negligence and license, by means of which great truths are lost sight of, and virtue is compromised; and secondly, that of sanctimonious or frivolous rigidity, and which is found, seldom or never, to justify itself by a proportionate internal purity. It is, for the most part, much easier to live in societies so formed, than to get into them. In the apostolic Churches, on the contrary, admission was easy, but the terms of continued fellowship difficult; or difficult to pretenders. The door of the primitive Church stood open, but the Church itself was kept clean. It is an equal fault for a Church to have an open door, and a promiscuous assemblage, like a market; or a door bolted upon an Augean stable. Morals are vitiated in the one place as fatally as in the other.

III. Christian association does indeed bring together homogeneous, but yet not undistinguished constituents. No sort of reciprocity of affection, or community of feeling and purpose, can be more absolute than that which should be characteristic of a Christian Church. A Church is a family—a brotherhood, intimately blended together and firmly compacted by immortal love. The welfare of one is as important and as dear to all, as that of another; yet this equality in love, is an equality in nothing else. The members of a Church are on a level, as are the members of a family. The one circle, as well as the other, embraces all degrees of power, of knowledge, and of dignity; and involves subordination, supremacies, obedience. Broadly classified, the Church consists of the taught and of the teachers, or of the governed and the governing; it is at once a school of knowledge, and a school of virtue; and those vast disparities, as well in virtue as in knowledge, in judgment and in conduct, which actually present themselves, become the source of confusion instead of advantage, unless there be effected and maintained a sorting of persons, and an assignment of functions, according to the abilities of individuals. We assume that any idea of a Church at all approaching to the notion of a spontaneous club of independent citizens, combining themselves for the furtherance of a common interest, and installing and removing their

officers at pleasure, is ESSENTIALLY at variance with the principle of a Christian Church. We assume moreover, that a church polity, such as we here represent it, can be consistently opposed only by those who rely upon a constant supernatural influence, imparting to each member, without human intervention, all the knowledge and virtue which each is to receive. The practical explication given of the general principles we are here advancing must depend directly upon the notion entertained of the CONSTITUENTS of a Church. For example: we may think of it (and this is in fact a prevailing opinion) as a purely voluntary association of adults, each in full possession of his personal course of conduct, and liable to no more control than he may please, from day to day, to submit to. This may be termed the political idea of a Church. On the other hand we may draw our notions of church polity more from the analogy of the domestic economy; and then a Church is an assemblage of persons enjoying various degrees of liberty, but none the absolute liberty proper to the members of a club; and some of these persons, namely, the infants of the Church, and its catechumens, who do, or who ought to form a large proportion of the entire body, are in no such sense personally free, nor are they possessed of a voice and vote in the affairs of the society. A Church, thus conceived of, implies, of course, a sort of government, and a principle of indepen-

dent authority, such as the first named idea does not admit. We assume that the latter conception comes much nearer to the apostolic and early model of ecclesiastical combination than the former. Existing controversies hinge, in a great degree, upon this very point; and we may be bold to add that, when the Christian scheme, in its benign and comprehensive intention, shall be more fully expanded than it is at present, and when its outstretched arms shall be suffered to embrace the social system, the notion of a Church will necessarily approximate to the latter idea, and will utterly reject the former: the first being secular and political, the second spiritual and divine.

IV. We have said that, as the constituents of a Church are naturally distinguished by the greatest possible disparities of knowledge, virtue, and age, and as the Church is both a school of learning, and a school of practice, there is implied the existence and exercise of functions as well of government as of instruction; and the possession of an effective power for carrying forward these various purposes. We now go on to allege, that these powers are not to be exercised casually, or spontaneously, or interchangeably, by whoever may, from time to time, assume them; but that OFFICES are to be assigned to OFFICERS, permanently (if not irrevocably) installed.

It has been affirmed, and even lately,* that, as it is the common privilege of all believers to be "priests and kings," a Church entire is a sacerdotal and royal choir, excluding the distinction between clergy and laity, which distinction contravenes, it is said, the very essence of the sacred association. It is affirmed, moreover, that the true ideal of a Church rejects any sort of supremacy or authority, other than that which a conclave of independent princes might, for convenience, institute to-day, and abrogate to-morrow. Do those who insist upon this idea of a universal hierarchy forget that, in the very contexts where the priestly dignity of all Christians is affirmed, spiritual authorities are recognized, and the duty of submission to church rulers is affirmed, in unqualified terms? It has been a frequent error to apply to the existing orders of common life certain high affirmations of Scripture, intended only, and true only, in a purely spiritual sense. It was thus that the ancient ascetics interpreted our Lord's injunctions, which were meant to elevate natural principles, in a sense that altogether subverted the social system, and did violence to God's own laws.

We here take it as a matter of history, not needing formal proof, that apostolic practice and precept established, in the primitive

* See Neander's 'History of the Christian Religion and Church.' *passim.*

Church, offices assigned to individuals, who permanently exercised the specific functions of their places. If instruction was to be carried on, there were to be teachers; and if order was to be maintained, there must be rulers; and these, not casually instated, or removable at pleasure, but firmly seated in their chairs, and removable only, if at all, in extraordinary modes, and on signal reasons.

Apart from the warrant of apostolic precept and example, or if left without authoritative guidance in this instance, a Christian society would reasonably and necessarily take the course of instituting permanent offices, inasmuch as the common sense and universal usage of mankind demands such a mode of securing the general welfare. The rule which requires functions to be assigned to persons, rises always in importance, and in obligation, in proportion to the difficulty and the value of the services to be performed. Trivial or facile duties may well be left to promiscuous agencies; not so those which, in a high degree, demand skill, experience, accomplishments, energy of mind, and specific qualities of the temper. Now in these respects there are no duties, whatever, equal in importance to those involved in the diffusion and maintenance of religion. No duties are at once so difficult, and so peculiar in their conditions. If in any case the

division of labour is necessary and beneficial, it is so in this case. Better leave the care of the public health, better leave the business of civil government, to the promiscuous ability of any who may offer their services, than so to leave the care of souls.

If a confirmatory argument were needed to establish this point, we might derive one of a conclusive, though inferential sort, from our Lord's formal enactment, That 'those who preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel.' In thus exempting the religious teacher from the ordinary labours of life, and in throwing upon the people the duty of shielding their instructors from secular solicitudes, it must follow, that certain persons are permanently devoted to the service of the Church; unless indeed we admit the great loss and damage, both secular and spiritual, which are consequent upon the taking up, and the laying down of labours, barely compatible the one with the other. Occasional services, remunerated by an occasional stipend, could never be approved of, as systematically the best and most economic mode of obtaining such services. A practice of this kind may, it is true, be justifiable under peculiar circumstances; but can never be good as a universal method. The very exception stated by St. Paul in his own case, establishes the rule; and with the less room for mistake, inasmuch as, on this point, he makes an explicit

allusion, in confirmation of his plea, to the Jewish sacerdotal institute, under which the ministers of religion, as a permanent body, received a revenue that was neither parsimonious nor precarious.

Our inference may be stated conversely.—As the preachers of the Gospel, by the express law of Christ, are entitled to a comfortable maintenance from the people; so the people, by implication of rights, may, so long as they afford this provision, claim the undivided services of their teachers. These duties are correlative; and the one may be assumed as the condition of the other. If the people fail to support their ministers in reasonable competency, these ministers may hold themselves free to provide for their wants in what other manner they may be able.

Here again we must say that, if we reject the clerical institute, our alternative is the hypothesis of a constant supernatural teaching, conveyed to the Church, either silently, or in so sovereign and casual a manner as to leave no room for the ordinary exercise of the human faculties. The clerical institute embodies the great principle, that God operates by the medium of second causes, always, where such a medium is naturally adapted to the end in view. Even in the immediate exertion of his almighty power, we find some attendant and ordinary instrumentality.

V. The train of our inferences leads us next to the incidental, though very important point, of the mode and conditions of that maintenance which the clerical body may rightfully demand from the people.

This point involves some general principles of extensive application. Not to go over the ground touched upon in a preceding section, we have yet to repeat the assumption, that Christianity implies, and leaves room for the exercise of common sense in all those matters which naturally and easily fall under its cognizance. In things intelligible and secular, revelation does not supersede reason, or interfere with its exercise. On this path superstitious and heated minds have entangled themselves in the most serious difficulties. Looking for a hand from Heaven, where Heaven says, 'Help thyself,' they have lost at once the benefits of reason, and the aids of revelation.

Now if there are at all any arrangements, connected with religion, which may be granted to come within the province of human prudence, pecuniary arrangements certainly are of that sort. In these, eminently, men are at home, and are competent to the part assigned them. Again, if there be any portion of the ecclesiastical economy which asks to be specifically adjusted, in each instance, to places, times, and popular habits, or if there be any portion concerning which an irrevocable and

universal enactment would have been undesirable, or impracticable, surely the matter of church revenues is such. Nothing could more effectually have obstructed the progress of the Gospel, nothing could have been more at variance with its spirit, and intention, as a religion for mankind, than the entailing upon the Church, by apostolic authority, certain fiscal regulations, every where and always obligatory. A system may be practicable and beneficial in one age or country, which is not so in another. Or there may be a mode of maintaining the ministers of religion decisively advantageous where Christianity is fully recognized by a whole people, which could not have obtained, and which could not even have been suggested, at first, and under those circumstances of opposition against which, for the accomplishment of high purposes, the Church was to push its way.

All that ought to be expected from the apostles on this subject, is precisely what we actually receive; namely, a very distinct assertion of the GENERAL PRINCIPLE, that those who devote themselves to the religious instruction of the people, should live by that means. The duty of the people and the claims of the clergy, are, by the inspired writers, established on the firm basis of an explicit enactment, as "from the Lord;" and an appeal also, confirmatory of both, is made at once to common reasons of

equity, and to the pure and generous sentiments which the Gospel brings into play. On no plea, except that of absolute inability, through extreme poverty, can a Christian people evade their obligation in this behalf. No individual, professing any sort of submission to the law of Christ, and no community publicly recognizing the Scriptures as divine, can be deemed at liberty to save himself, or itself, the cost of a clerical institute; nor can the indifference of any, or their mistaken apprehensions of what is becoming, excuse them from bearing their part in this expense. God 'commands all men every where to repent, and believe the Gospel;' all therefore to whom this message comes are liable to the charge thence accruing; nor is there any injustice in requiring men to fulfil a condition necessarily connected with their own highest welfare.

In what particular mode the people shall fulfil their obligation toward their religious teachers, is not determined by the authority which enjoins it. The ground here is open, and the subject, in all its bearings, lies within the compass of common sense; we are free therefore to devise schemes, and to try experiments; and, for our guidance we may turn to the lessons of experience. Nothing, in this matter, is unlawful, which involves no injustice; and we hold it a most idle superstition to affirm that nothing is abstractedly good, or Christian-like, except that

accidental mode, which, from the peculiarity of the case, was the only one whereby the first promulgators of the Gospel could be maintained. In truth, no modern religious community adheres to any such rule; but on the contrary, the very parties most vehement in their advocacy of the voluntary principle, themselves carefully retain whatever corporate property may have fallen into their hands; and while they inveigh against endowments, must be understood to mean, any endowments but their own.

The first Christian teachers could be supported in no other way than by the undefined gratuities of their converts; nor, during the spring-time of zeal and affection was this revenue likely either to be insufficient, or injurious by its redundancy. The same means of support must, of course, always be abstractedly lawful; and it may indeed be free from objection, so long as some method of distribution is adhered to (as in the first age of the Church) which cuts off the dependence of individuals upon individuals. And yet this simple plan will always tend toward a more complex form. At a very early time it actually reached such a form; for the Church possessed herself of a chest; that is to say, became mistress of a disposable capital; and availed herself of the powers and advantages thence naturally arising. The stewards of that chest, and those for whom they acted, were no longer in an absolute sense dependent upon

the people. No imaginable provisions can exclude the possibility of such accumulations. Moreover the Church, even in its infancy, became the inheritress of property, real as well as personal; and often to a large amount. Were these bequests (whether prudent and desirable or not) were they essentially immoral and unchristian, and such as should have been invariably renounced? They are not so esteemed in our own enlightened times; nor are they rejected by the most stern and self-denying of our sects.

Or we might ask, was it an immoral act, on the part of Constantine, when he recognized and confirmed the then existing property of religious corporations, and so at once sealed and saved the wealth of the Church? we do not so think it. The Church, therefore, in the gradual, the natural, and the UNAVOIDABLE course of events, had moved from her original position, in relation to the people; and though no impost was levied, was yet sustained in a mode essentially unlike the one that had prevailed in the apostolic age. The voluntary principle was still in full vigour; but its bearing upon the clergy had become complicated, and indirect; and this had happened in a manner not at any distinct stage of the process to be either condemned, or arrested.

When at length the civil authority felt the necessity of at once setting a bound to the superstitious profession of the people toward the

Church, and of stretching a controlling hand over the avidity of the clergy, and when different methods of commutation were introduced, or a definite impost was granted, in the place of unbounded gratuities; can we affirm that the change was from a better method to a worse; or that, in any sense, primitive purity was by this means compromised in behalf of corruption and subserviency? The very reverse is nearer to the truth. The system of church taxation, and the restrictive testamentary enactments therewith connected, came in as A RELIEF to the people, and as a check upon the clergy: it was a dam, thrown across the swollen torrent that had been long drowning the Church, and draining the State.

Nothing could be more natural than for those, whether churchmen or statesmen, who wished to substitute a legal provision for the then voluntary principle, and its enormous abuses, to look to the Mosaic Institution, as their guide and sanction.—The inspired writers had given no warning that a system which the Divine wisdom had established in one instance, must be held inexpedient and unlawful in every other; nay, they had virtually linked the Christian to the Jewish clerical scheme by appealing to the one as affording a reason applicable to the other. The universal usage of mankind accorded, in this instance, with that of the Jewish people; nor did any thing stand opposed to it,

but the accidental practice of the primitive Church, which practice had itself, as was natural, fallen into a disorderly and pernicious course.

In truth, to preserve, for any length of time, and in its absolute simplicity and purity, the principle of clerical support, by the immediate and undefined gratuities of the people, is what no communion has been able to effect: nor can we even imagine the means of doing so. But when once this pristine simplicity has given way, as it soon must, in part, or entirely, to a FINANCIAL SYSTEM, and has admitted accumulations, endowments, and corporate possessions, then a very fair question presents itself, namely, whether an irregular and anomalous method, open to undefined abuses, may not, with high advantage, as well to the people as to the clergy, be exchanged for a legal provision. To oppose such an exchange on the pretext of primitive purity and abstract principle, must be deemed equally disingenuous and illogical, when the objection comes from those who make no scruple of accepting bequests, of retaining endowments, of accumulating funds, or of renting the area of a chapel. To demand payment for so many square inches of a bench or pew, is a practice as little apostolic as to demand a tithe.

It is however quite manifest, and ought always to be in the most explicit manner ac-

knowledged, that where, unhappily, Christianity has sunk down into several irreconcilable, or unreconciled forms, and where faction and political interests have firmly encased theological controversies, there, some special provisions are called for by bare justice, and by the principle of religious liberty, to prevent a public church tax from resting unfairly upon portions of the community. True indeed it is that no arrangements which take their necessity from what is abstractedly evil, can be, in themselves, abstractedly good:—abstract evil proves itself to be evil, at whatever point it comes in contact with our welfare: nothing can avail to make it work well; and our best ingenuity and best intentions still are baffled. Now religious divisions are the greatest of abstract evils; and they therefore trouble and distract and disparage every community that is affected by them. So long as religious divisions continue, it is vain to hope for an absolutely prosperous and happy condition, either of the Church or the State. Meanwhile every possible endeavour should be made to avert, or to remove those occasions of exasperation which keep alive faction, and put in peril the whole frame-work of society. It may indeed be wise and expedient to support, or to abstain from removing, an existing form of religion; although it be a form disapproved of by a portion of the people; but in this case the acquiescence of the

dissidents should be mildly urged on the general grounds of public utility; not demanded on high and arrogant principles; and in such a case these dissidents would indeed entitle themselves to great praise could they rise to the patriotic, Christian-like, and generous feeling, of consenting to a state of things confessedly not abstractedly the best possible; but yet the best which can be effected under the embarrassing circumstances that surround us. This perhaps is too much to expect from the infirmity of human nature; and if so, it will only remain for us to alleviate, in every practicable manner, the galling burden that rests on some of our fellow-citizens and Christian brethren.

VI. We have assumed, that the Church, as it has its offices, must have its officers; and these a class of persons permanently devoted to religious services. We assume moreover, that the particular mode in which this class is to receive its pecuniary support is a matter fully open to the determination of the common sense of mankind; and that therefore any method is lawful, which is found to be expedient.

But the question which next presents itself is of the highest moment, and involves almost every other consideration, connected with church polity. Our question is this—Whence does the clerical function and power arise; or in what manner is it transmitted from hand

to hand; or under whose control does it rest?

In simply stating his opinion on this capital point, the author must not be supposed either unapprised of the vast controversy of which it has been the subject; or as presuming to dogmatize where the wise are diffident; but he yet feels that, as the question has seldom hitherto been treated except by partisans, and never without an anxious regard to some existing interests, there is room for considering it in the light of common sense, and as it appears to minds divested of sectarian predilections.

The clerical function and power may then, in the first place, be imagined to be derived, in each instance, immediately from Heaven, by impulses and irresistible convictions on the mind of the individual who challenges to himself the right to exercise ecclesiastical authority. Such was the prophetic function of old; and such, essentially, is the idea of the Christian ministry entertained by the Quakers; and in measure too by some other modern sects. We do not here deem it necessary to entertain this supposition, as worthy of argument: in truth, by its very nature, it exempts itself from the range of reason: its only ground is that of perpetual miraculous attestation.

In the second place, sacerdotal authority may be affirmed to spring, by perpetual derivation and tradition, from itself. That is to say, the

clerical body, in each successive age, may be held to be empowered to deliver to its successors, called and installed by itself, the entire authority which, in a like manner, it received from its predecessors. This doctrine is the fundamental article of the Romish Church (yet it is a doctrine quite separable from the usurpations and errors of that Church) and it has been inherited and embodied by the Church of England, and other episcopal communions.

In the third place, all powers of government and instruction, within the Church, may be alleged to originate with the will of those for whom such powers are exercised: that is to say, of the people, as distinguished from their clergy, and who may elect and remove their teachers and rulers at pleasure.

Or lastly, there may be imagined a sort of compromise between clergy and laity, such as shall leave a power of calling and ordaining with the former, and of electing and instating with the latter. This last method prevails among most of our modern sects, but under circumstances that produce different practical results. Presbyterianism, attempered in an effective degree by lay influence, presents this scheme in perhaps its most favourable aspect, and at once confers a substantial and necessary power upon the clergy, while the people have the means of securing themselves against tyranny and encroachment. The congregational com-

munions, while they attribute a semblance of special authority to their clergy, in the instance of ordination (which however is now very commonly confessed to amount to nothing more than a paternal or fraternal recognition of the people's sovereign act) do substantially devolve all power, not indeed upon the CHURCH;—for a Church, by universal admission, is a body, consisting of people and ministers; but upon the laity, as acting apart from the clergy, and as considered competent to decide in the most important of all affairs, without their rulers, and indeed while they have none.* Moreover, by the absolute insulation of each chapel society, and by the immediate dependence of each minister upon the single congregation which he serves, all forms and semblances of clerical authority, be they what they may, are virtually held in abeyance. He who must depart when those who support him no longer wish for his services, exercises no power such as can avail in those very instances where power is needed—namely, to enforce discipline against sturdy delinquents, and to maintain truth and morality in opposition to the caprices or the lax desires of the people. This is a theory of church government which, much as it may

* Let it be remembered, that though a CONGREGATION may be destitute of a minister, a CHURCH, in the primitive sense of the word, is never destitute of her pastors. The severest persecutions did not reduce any ancient Church to absolute widowhood.

recommend itself to our modern republican sentiments, must be denounced as subversive of all religious authority (whether for good or ill) and as broadly and essentially distinguished from the apostolic model.

In making a choice among the above-named principles, and especially if we were to do so apart from apostolic precepts or precedents, it would be very natural to have recourse to the analogy of civil life; and, as under a free government, all public functions return, immediately or remotely, to their source—the will of those for whose benefit they are exercised, the inference would be, that religious functions should obey the same rule; and that the selective and elective powers, including necessarily the power to revoke, and to repel pastoral authority, should reside in the people. This sort of reasoning from secular principles, acquires peculiar force when applied to religious communities in modern times, breathing as they do the inspiriting atmosphere of democratic independence. Certain modes of government might, it may be said, be tolerable or good in times or in countries where the popular mind had not been kindled, and where silent submission to irresponsible authority has long been the settled habit of the people; but the same modes become wholly inapplicable to societies unaccustomed to endure any species of restraint beyond what is felt by all to be indispensable.

It may, we say, seem as if a scheme of church government which involves substantial clerical powers, even though proved to be apostolic, could not find room upon modern ground.

Then again, when the constant tendency of privileged orders, and especially of sacerdotal orders, to encroach upon the public liberties, is considered, we must feel strongly the danger of giving place to a self-derived, and independent religious authority. With the evidence of history before us, and the common impulses of human nature in view, every dispassionate mind reluctates to admit a principle that seems so pregnant with mischief. If at last compelled to grant that our Lord actually left his Church on this foundation, we are placed in a position that demands the most vigilant regard; nor can we do less than bestow an extreme care upon the duty of maintaining, in its full efficiency, that counterpoise to spiritual despotism, or rather that safeguard against its advances, which we find to have been in play within the apostolic societies.

In the present instance argumentative equity requires us to premise a caution of the following kind:—while speaking of the maintenance of the clergy, we rebutted an inference too hastily drawn from the practice of the first Churches, as if it were to be binding upon ourselves, by saying that, as, in the nature of the case, no other method of supporting the

preachers of the Gospel than that of the free contributions of the people could then find room, it will not follow that the same method was intended to be every where adhered to, when the external position of Christianity in the world should come to be materially altered. Now the analogy of reasoning demands that we should, at the least, hesitate a while before we regard the conduct of the Institutor of a NEW RELIGION in appointing his ministers, or even their method of proceeding in naming their successors, as absolutely conclusive in favour of the same method, in after times; inasmuch as no other plan of appointment can be imagined as proper or practicable, at the commencement of a new order of things: yet some other plan may be both possible and eligible when this same economy has run on through a tract of time. It would be a solecism to talk of the popular election or installation of the teachers of a new faith. Let then this preliminary caution be kept in mind; and although it may be found that we search the Gospels, the Acts, and the Epistles in vain for any precept, precedent, or fair inference, such as might warrant the popular creation of the ministers of religion, or a popular control over them, when created, in the way of election, removal, or dispossession of clerical character, nevertheless we must abstain from positively concluding that no such democratic

control may be lawful in our own times. In fact, though not to be traced in the canonic writings, the popular voice and suffrage in the election of the bishop, unquestionably obtained a very early prevalence; and those who absolutely exclude the will of the people in the choice of their pastors, although not reprovable by letter of Scripture, yet oppose one of the most ancient and universal of ecclesiastical usages.

A curious inconsistency has attended the modern controversy on the source or origin of clerical power, inasmuch as the opponents have mutually exchanged positions. Those, on the one side, whose rule and practice it ordinarily is to pay a profound regard to ancient authority, and who, in not a few instances, are accustomed to eke out a scanty scripture proof by the testimony of the Fathers, and to lean on the arm of tradition, shut their ears on this point against the clear and undoubted voice of venerable antiquity, and stiffly adhere to the express apostolic practice. On the other hand—and we cannot but note the strange casualties incident to theological warfare, those who, on almost every other question, if not on every other, take their immovable stand upon the explicit authority of Scripture, and who will do neither more nor less than can be made good by text upon text, these very persons, in defending the main article of their

ecclesiastical polity, namely the popular call, appointment, election, and removal, of pastors and teachers, are left without warranty of Scripture (some torturing of terms excepted) and without the sanction of a single apostolic instance; and are compelled to support the practice they adopt on the lower ground of expediency, or of the natural rights of men, or of the example of the early Church, as reported by ecclesiastical writers. Thus does the characteristic practice of these parties stand contradicted by their characteristic principle. We would be careful not to overstate facts, and yet can say nothing less than this, That the sovereignty of the people in church affairs, their competency to act without their pastors, the dependence of single pastors or teachers upon single congregations, the validity of a popular call to the work of the ministry, the election of each pastor by his flock, and the power to remove him at pleasure; or, in one word, the doctrine of unmixed church democracy, is zealously professed, and resolutely acted upon, by those who affirm that our Lord left his Church, as well in its polity as its doctrine and morals, such precisely as he willed that it should continue; and that whatever is not of express Divine appointment is a corruption, and an affront to his supremacy!

The strangeness of this inconsistency has in fact imposed upon the Christian world; for it

has been assumed as incredible that the rigid advocates of the sufficiency of Scripture in matters of polity and worship, should themselves have laid, as the foundation-stone of their ecclesiastical structure, a practice that is destitute of apostolic precept and example. It is not without some amazement that we find a congregational Church, on the modern scheme, proceeding in the momentous act of creating, or of electing to itself a pastor and teacher, without being able to allege, from the New Testament, any law or license to that effect, or any example of an unambiguous and satisfactory kind. Whether this practice may now be expedient and lawful, is not the question; but is it formally enjoined? are the people instructed by the apostles in what manner to acquit themselves of so difficult and peculiar a duty? or is any one of the apostolic societies exhibited in deliberation on the occasion of calling one pastor to their service, and of discharging another? On secular principles nothing can be more simple or reasonable than that those who pay should command; and in the present temper of mankind, especially in certain circles, it may be nearly impracticable to secure submission to any other law. Nevertheless, the serious question returns upon us—Is this the law, or this the principle recognized as the basis of church polity in the New Testament? We are compelled to answer—it is not.

That our Lord, in a sovereign manner, elected and empowered every one of those who were to promulgate his religion is not questioned. The apostles assume the same irresponsible authority in relation to such as they acknowledged in the character of religious teachers; and while they freely admitted, and indeed invited, the popular concurrence on all occasions where common or secular interests were involved, and especially in every pecuniary transaction, yet reserved to themselves the power to create spiritual officers. For aught that appears in the CANONICAL WRITINGS, no other mode of appointment found room in the Church; and the assumption that the apostles exercised this power in virtue of their extraordinary commission, and on the ground of their miraculous knowledge of hearts, is purely gratuitous. So it may have been; but we have no evidence in support of the allegation.

The apostolic epistles abound, as well in exhortations addressed to the people, urging the duty of submission to their spiritual rulers, as in admonitions given to the officers of the Church, and pressing upon them the temper and conduct, the fidelity, the purity, the impartiality, and the meekness, which become their station. We find also, in the three clerical epistles of Paul, addressed to two of the individuals whom he had empowered to set in order, and to keep in order the Churches, specific instructions concerning

the appointment and government of spiritual officers, both higher and lower. All this accords well with the supposition that the clerical authority and function springs from within itself, and is irrespective of the popular will. But if the congregational and democratic theory, or any principle allied to it, be the true one, or if any such principle had been contemplated as what was to succeed to the then extraordinary apostolic authority, we cannot but expect, on so capital and momentous a subject, that necessary instructions, and a formal warranty too, would have been very distinctly conveyed to the parties who were to exercise powers so extensive, so delicate, and so difficult. On various questions of discipline, christian societies, at large, are addressed by St. Paul, and instructed what course to pursue: the BROTHERHOOD is told how it should act. But what article of discipline can be compared in importance with the serious duty, devolving so often upon our modern congregational Churches, of looking out for themselves, and of instating their bishops? Again, can a Church, at any time, be called to discharge a part so serious as is that of dismissing, and perhaps of degrading its bishop? yet, for the acquittal of none of these perplexing duties, does a Church receive one word of guidance, or one syllable of authentication, from the inspired writings. Let it be affirmed that all necessary instructions on such points may be

gathered by fair inference from the general spirit of Christianity. Be it so ; only let it then be clearly understood, that the first principle of modern congregationalism rests, not on scripture precept and precedent, but upon general and vague inferences.

If the apostolic writings afford a single particle of evidence, direct or indirect, in favour of the doctrine of the popular origination, or popular control of the clerical office, let it be produced. If not, even if we should admit by accommodation the propriety of some sort of popular influence in this behalf, we must do so manifestly in contradiction to the principle of the sufficiency, and the sole authority of Scripture, in matters of church polity. The two principles of modern democracy in church affairs, and of an unbending adherence to the letter of Scripture in what relates to worship and government, are abhorrent, the one of the other.

Meanwhile, calm and well informed men, indifferent to actual interests, must halt on the threshold when summoned to enter the Church, if the ultimate power therein is alleged to rest with a sacerdotal order, self-evolved, and irresponsible. Will human nature well bear to be so far trusted? Does even Christianity afford any safeguard against the natural abuses and encroachments that attend insulated and undefined spiritual authority? These proper and anxious inquiries lead the way to our next

rudiment of Church Polity, and which presents an adequate balance to sacerdotal powers.

VII. Christianity, assuredly, is neither despotic in its spirit, nor could it generate despotisms, in any case, if allowed to retain that rudiment which, in the primitive Churches, operated as a natural counterpoise to clerical authority. This counterpoise was the participation of the people —the πλῆθος, in church deliberations, and church acts; and especially the scope allowed to popular agency in every punitive exercise of discipline. An effective check is this to what might otherwise be formidable in sacerdotal power. So long as it is fully and freely admitted, clerical authority may safely reach a high and salutary point; but remove or restrict it, and then our alternative is either to give room to the pride and arrogance of priests, or to cashier the ministers of religion of all dignity and power (as an order) and to deny them the greater part of their useful influence. The presence and active operation of this popular element in church affairs is not a whit less necessary as the guarantee of the power of the clergy, than as the safeguard of the liberties of the people.

As the primitive Churches knew nothing of that ministerial subserviency which belongs to our modern congregational communities, so neither did they admit that fatal separation between clergy and laity which destroys all

effective reciprocity between the two, leaves to the former a perilous, nay ruinous irresponsibility, and treats the latter as the passive, or rather the dead subjects of clerical operations. On this point almost every existing Christian community has moved far from the foundation on which alone the Church can be securely reared:—some, throwing the sovereign power into the hands of the people; while others have left it, unbalanced, with the clergy. Christianity may be expected to regain its energy when, to the clergy is restored that independent authority and dignity, as the ministers of Heaven, with which they may safely be entrusted, so long as they yield to the apostolic counterpoise of popular influence.

In every age it has been by gathering themselves into clusters, apart from the people, by sitting in conclave, with the doors barred against the laity, and by concerting measures, not in the church, but in chambers and closets, that the ministers of religion have converted the Gospel into a system of tyranny and an engine of cruelty. The history of Spiritual Despotism hinges upon this divulsion of the elements of Church Power. An impious and fatal divorce of what God had joined—a divorce craftily effected by the clergy, was the principal means of introducing and of establishing all corruptions and all usurpations.

The people, whether in mass, or by represen-

tation, being present, and taking a share in church proceedings, and being allowed a real, not a nominal agency in church acts—knowing whatever is proposed, and concurring in whatever is determined, there will no longer be danger in granting to the clergy as high and free an authority as Christian men could wish to exercise, or safely to themselves sustain.

The apostolic societies were, in the fullest sense of the word, COMMUNITIES; not indeed chaotic assemblages, liable to the confusions that attend unrestrained democracy, but organized bodies, constituted of head, and heart, and members, concurring, according to their several powers, in the same acts, and bound together by a vital sympathy. The principle of apostolic church polity would, as we assume, have been violated in an equal degree, either by any attempt of the people to bring their pastors into a subservient condition, as their stipendiaries; or by any endeavour of the clergy to sustain and extend their prerogatives by secret conspiracy. The two great rudiments of ecclesiastical polity, namely, the sacerdotal origin of sacerdotal powers; and the presence and concurrence of the people in acts of discipline, and in the enactment of regulations, and especially in the management of pecuniary affairs, are correlative, and the worst evils arise from parting them, or from practically nullifying either. The one is not worth contending for, apart from the other;

and the one is essential to the complete operation of the other. Whichever party aims to compromise the privileges and rights of the other, is blind to its own.

We have already spoken of the first of these two principles: and nothing is easier than to establish the second. As matter of history the fact of the concurrence of the mass of the Church in deliberations and decisions stands on the face of the apostolic writings. The multitude came together, and took their part in the most important consultations: to the multitude was referred the election of officers charged with the secondary affairs of the community: the brethren held up the hand, although they did not lay the hand: the χειροτονία was allowed them, where the χειροθεσία was reserved to the presbyters and bishops. Public business was indeed arranged, propounded, and carried through by Public Persons; but still it was carried as *public business*. The machination in closets of interests that ought to be openly discussed, is a treason against the community; nor was any such secret management admitted even by the divinely commissioned apostles.

But the tenor and the terms of the apostolic epistles afford the most satisfactory evidence on the point of the liberal and OPEN constitution of the first Churches. These epistles, fraught with various and specific advices on questions of discipline and government, are addressed

comprehensively and directly to the mass of believers;—not to the people through the medium of their rulers. The pastors are indeed mentioned, but this mention of them distinctly implies that the writer, in each instance, had his eye immediately fixed upon the people. Were then the people—the believers at large, the mere subjects of church power? did they constitute an inert mass, upon which sacerdotal functions were to be exercised? Common sense is insulted by any such supposition; historic evidence is outraged by affirming it to have been the fact. The Church, with its teachers and pastors, was one living body, various in its functions, but full of energy and action.

The course recommended or enjoined, on various occasions, by St. Paul, and the public measures which he advises to be pursued, were plainly supposed to issue from the breadth of the Church; and not to be promulgated from the closet of an oligarchy. Our inference in this instance has precisely the same strength as that which we draw in favour of the independence of the clerical function from the fact, that all the instructions bearing directly and explicitly upon the appointment, investiture, character, and behaviour of the rulers of the Church, are conveyed to INDIVIDUALS (not to Churches) and these being such as had received an irresponsible authority, from an irresponsible source.

There will be no end to the nice distinctions

and the subterfuges resorted to by interested controvertists; nor must we expect to convince such persons. But men who respect themselves, and who have learned to exercise a vigorous common sense, in common affairs, will hold it certain, in all cases, that those who are instructed how to perform particular duties, are actually the parties looked to for the discharge of such duties. Exhortations and commands are not cross-directed by plain and upright men. A and B are not told in what manner X and Z should acquit themselves of their parts. But in the apostolic epistles it is the people at large who are instructed on what principles to exercise church discipline, and how to arrange the secular interests of the society. At the same time is it not the people at large, but two individuals of high ecclesiastical rank, who are charged with whatever relates to the selection, investment, and control of teachers and rulers. Even those officers in the choice of whom the people exercised a discretion, are classed with purely clerical persons in these instructions, inasmuch as it was not without the χειροθεσία and approval of the primate that they were to be instated.

We conclude then, that a cordial and effective admission of the people — meaning, the members of congregations, to a participation in the management of church affairs, and especially in the infliction of chastisements, and in

the control of pecuniary interests, is an essential and most important rudiment of church polity.

In relation to the source and derivation of the clerical function, we have been compelled to charge the dissenting communities of this country with a capital and very serious departure from apostolic principle and practice. We are now bound, in justice to our argument (and for the approval of our impartiality) to assert the equally important fault of the English Church, in excluding its members at large from that just influence which the same apostolic practice and principle allows to them.

VIII. We have then before us the constituents of a church, and their reciprocal influence. It only remains to inquire, what should be the relative position of those who exercise the various public functions of the body. The following considerations seem proper to be premised to such an inquiry.

1st. It should be admitted that the information furnished in the writings of the New Testament concerning the forms of government prevailing in the apostolic Church is scanty, incomplete, informal, to some extent ambiguous, and such, in a word, as excludes the supposition that any definite polity was intended to be authoritatively conveyed to the Church universal. Or let it be granted that the few who are

fully and familiarly conversant with ecclesiastical antiquity, may arrive at a clear conviction that such and such was the economy of the first churches, or of most of them; yet the SCRIPTURE EVIDENCE alone, and unaided by learned researches, can never be so presented to the mass of Christians as to command their assent to this or that system, as apostolic and unchangeable.

2dly. The information we gather, in part from the incidental allusions of the canonical writers, and in part from the extant remains of early Christian literature, suggests the belief (in itself probable) that, under the eye, and with the approbation or permission of the apostles, different modes of church government prevailed in different countries. It is, we say, perfectly credible, and pretty nearly established as a fact, that a certain ecclesiastical constitution which might well accord with the national sentiments and civil usages of the Christians of Syria, or Persia, or the provinces of Hellenic Asia, might be altogether repugnant to the feelings of the Churches of Greece proper, of Italy, Gaul, or northern Africa. That sort of superstitious, servile, and despotic inflexibility which is characteristic of the arrogant churchman of later ages, assuredly was not the temper of the first promulgators of the Gospel. St. Paul, especially, had learned that high wisdom which is at once immovable in principle, and compliant in circumstantials. The whole analogy of his

behaviour, and of his sentiments, contradicts the supposition that he went about, carrying an iron model of ecclesiastical government, from country to country.

3dly. We must be especially aware of those fallacies in argument that arise from placing reliance upon either the etymological import, or the afterwards acquired and specific sense of certain terms of office; since it is manifest that these terms are used convertibly throughout the New Testament, and are interchanged with a latitude and a freedom that does not at all accord with the definitions and assumptions of modern controvertists. Modern controversies, on church government, have been rendered indecisive by the fault, common to all parties, of contending for and against NAMES; instead of inquiring concerning facts. What avails it, for example, to prove that the pastors of single and small congregations were called bishops? The only question of significance is this, whether, when there were ten, fifty, or a hundred congregations in a city, each was an insulated and independent Church, having its bishop, and its exclusive organization, or whether they did not, *in all such cases,* constitute one Church, governed by a single president (call him what we may) who bare rule over all the clerical persons ministering to those several congregations? If we find in fact at Jerusalem, at Antioch, at Ephesus, at Alexandria, at Rome, some

such economy as this, and always ONE CHURCH, comprising many congregations, directed by one angel, or chief, those who choose may argue the question—what was his title?

The apostles evidently employ terms of office rather in the power of their abstract meaning, than as the fixed and conventional designations of established functionaries. The apostles call themselves presbyters and deacons too. Our Lord is declared to be both Bishop and Deacon. Presbyters are bishops; and bishops are teachers and helpers; and a Primate is exhorted, in one place, to do the work of an evangelist, and in another, fully to discharge the office of a deacon. There can be no conclusiveness in an argument that assumes a fixed appropriation of titles when no such appropriation had taken place.

What is highly important to observe, is this, that the liquid or convertible state in which we find the designations of office in the New Testament, indicates clearly the yet undefined condition of the functions to which such titles are, in that promiscuous manner, applied. It is true, in relation to civil, as well as to sacred dignities, or public duties, that the interchangeable application of titles, affords a sure guide to the circumstances of the community within which it prevails. A steady and exactly defined constitution of offices never fails to be quickly followed by a well marked usage, assigning certain desig-

nations to certain functionaries; to disturb which becomes an affront to dignities, and is instantly resented. Not even the most heedless writers, in any age, fail to pay respect to such verbal demarcations of honour. The *name* of office is known to be an important preservative of the *prerogatives* of office; and when once such prerogatives have come to be settled and distinctly ascertained, the several names that mark the gradations of rank cease to be convertible. On this rule we conclude, with some degree of assurance, that, during the apostolic age, forms of government and the distribution of public services, were still open to many variations and anomalies. No writer of the age of Cyprian uses the words bishop, presbyter, and deacon, so indeterminately or so abstractedly as do the apostles.

From these premises we draw an inference decisive against all high and exclusive pretensions, on which side soever they may be advanced; and against arrogance and dogmatism, whatever model of polity it may profess to maintain. Nevertheless, it may be true that the concurrent testimony of Christian antiquity preponderates largely on the side of a certain system; and moreover, that this same system proves itself, if we might so term it, to be the spontaneous form of external Christianity, whenever the natural course of things (during a prosperous condition of the Church) is not

interfered with by special opinions or prejudices.

We have said that a certain model of church government presents itself as the spontaneous form of external Christianity, where Christianity flourishes, and spreads; and we trace the development of natural and universal causes in the following manner.—

Christianity is in an enfeebled or a corrupted state, or it must be labouring under extraordinary external difficulties, in every case, where it fails to diffuse itself on all sides from the centre where it may first be planted. Wherever it does not so spread, inquiry ought to be made for the cause of obstruction; and doubtless it may be discovered. The Gospel, in the hands of its first promulgators, did so spread; and it may fairly be assumed, that the miraculous powers at the command of the apostles and their colleagues, did not much more than counterbalance the external opposition it had to encounter. In all the large cities of the Roman world the converts to Christianity were numerous, and in some amounted to several thousand persons; and even in smaller cities and towns they were more than could assemble in any one synagogue, or chamber of a private house. In all such cities or towns there were therefore several congregations, statedly assembling for public worship in such places as convenience might dictate.

This question then presents itself, and must

needs be determined—What was the rule and principle of the relationship subsisting among these congregations, and what the system of organization, if any, which combined the clergy officiating in these assemblies? This question, or these two questions, are in no way to be evaded; and the determination of them carries, substantially, the question of ecclesiastical polity. The spirit and precepts of the Gospel demand, and its diffusion and maintenance as an external constitution require, that all Christians within the walls of a city, or within the circuit of a district, should recognize each other, as such, and should co-operate to promote their common welfare. They are in fact related by juxta-position; it is impossible that they should be ignorant of each other's existence, as Christians: they are therefore bound to maintain fellowship; or if they neglect to do so, nothing can preserve them from running into rivalry and faction. Unless molten into one mass, and unless commingled in every possible manner, by interchange of offices, the strong natural tendency to jealousy and division among separate corporations, will quickly and certainly come into play, to the infinite damage of all, and the dishonour of religion.

The span of a roof, or the number of sittings between one wall of a chapel and its opposite, are accidental and inconsiderable circumstances, altogether unworthy to be taken any account of

when we are estimating the force and compass of those motives which should give life to Christian association. No rule can be more whimsical or arbitrary, and none much more injurious or illiberal, than that which measures a Church by the size of a chamber or a chapel. The energy and expansiveness of Christian love disdains and resents any such mathematical restriction. A Church is the organized Christianity of a certain circle or district, within which actual combination and intercourse may take place. The temper and the usages generated by congregationalism have greatly obscured the glory of the Gospel, as a principle of extensive fellowship.

Whatever may be the advantages, or the enjoyments, or the duties that attach to religious combination as subsisting within the walls of a chapel, attach also to religious combination, such as it may subsist within the walls of a city; and again, within the boundaries of a province. On the other hand, whatever evils accrue from the admission of partial interests and factions within a single society, accrue also, and even in a more fatal degree, from the rivalry and insulation of neighbouring societies. Moreover, as incidental acquaintance and casual friendship is not church communion among individuals; so neither does the unorganized and ungoverned correspondence of neighbouring societies satisfy the conditions, or secure the advantages of

church order. The principle, both of love and of order, which applies to three hundred Christians, applies, by the same reason, and with the same force, to three thousand, or to thirty thousand Christians.

Christianity tends always to, and demands, social organization. Where there is no organization there is no Christianity: where organization is imperfect or casual, there Christianity is feeble or factious; and if there be good reason for securing *any* order, or for instituting *any* government, on religious grounds, there is the same reason for effecting the most perfect order, and for establishing the most finished system of government possible. Dangers, it is true, attend all systems of combination; but still greater dangers attach to the want of combination. Evils are not averted, but only exchanged, by foregoing the benefits of an extensive economy, or polity. Christianity is not merely love and peace, but a BOND of love and peace. To profess the love, and to reject the bond, is deemed, in all cases, a subterfuge. There are those who say, 'May we not have the affection and the sanctity of marriage without the knot?' No such licence is permitted in any well ordered community. Whoever refuses to be bound to a good and virtuous condition, harbours contempt of the principle which sanctions the obligation.

We assume then that Christians, near to each

other, are not to constitute many Churches, but one Church—let the chapels in which they happen to assemble be five, or five hundred. As a matter of history, no question can be raised respecting the combination of Christians in cities and districts, during the primitive ages. We hear little or nothing of the unimportant circumstance of the particular buildings or chambers in which congregations met; but we know, beyond doubt, that, until the seamless vesture of Christ was rent by angry spirits, the brethren of every city, and its suburbs, formed one communion, and ate of one loaf, and were led and ruled by one staff. There was one centre and one circumference; or rather, one fold and one shepherd. Our modern chapel-economy, which makes each congregation a church, with its bishop, assuredly was not known at Jerusalem, at Cæsarea, at Antioch, at Carthage, at Alexandria. There were indeed the Churches of Galatia; and there was a Church in a house, where that house could contain all the faithful of the vicinity; but not so where converts were reckoned by thousands or myriads. Congregationalism, in the modern sense of the term, had place wherever Christianity was hemmed in, or wherever it had become inert; but not where the word of the Lord "ran and was glorified;" or where "believers were added to the Church daily—multitudes, both of men and women."

But how did the primitive combination of

Christians, within cities and districts, affect the relationship and internal organization of the clergy? or how must such a combination, necessary and proper as it is, affect church government in any age? The clergy are, by such combinations, brought into society as a body, and nothing can then avert (nor should we wish it to be averted) the establishment of some species of hierarchical subordination. An incidental, and yet highly important consequence of this municipal organization, in the ancient Church, was the interchange of the services of teachers among the congregations of a diocese. It was not imagined that the talents and accomplishments of a single mind; even of the most gifted, could supply sufficient movement and instruction to the same people, week after week, and year after year. Our modern usages, in this behalf, involve a very serious practical error. To leave a congregation submerged in the stagnant pool of a single mind, for half a century, can never consist with its progress in knowledge, or with its vitality. Nothing perhaps has more benumbed Christianity, or prevented its extension.

Again; this same municipal association of the people and clergy, effectively cut off the dependence of the clergy, individually, upon the leaders of single congregations. The church fund did indeed accrue from voluntary contributions; but it arose from a broad surface;

and it reached indirectly those who received it. The people had no opportunity given them to modify doctrine, to soften morality, or to avert discipline, by the tacit efficacy of their power as the paymasters of their teachers.

Once more; the same economy broke up, in great degree, that too natural tendency of things, which places the clergy of a vicinity in opposition, the one to the other, as chiefs of companies, and as rival candidates for popular favour. Wholly to preclude this most unhappy tendency is indeed impracticable on any scheme; yet we should certainly avoid a system which, in a direct and powerful manner, stimulates personal ambition. Neighbouring congregations, founded on the congregational principle, hardly avoid grudges and disagreements, transmitted often from one generation to another, like the feuds of Arabian hordes. Then again, the spirit of this system, irritated by a false jealousy on the subject of the rights of conscience, impels division and separation, often on trivial grounds. Dislikes or predilections, personal bickerings, and family discords, lead to outbursts of independency; and thus a sect propagates itself, not always by natural growth or offset, like a tree; but by bisection or rending, like certain orders of the animal kingdom.

Congregationalism, a modern scheme altogether, sprung, as a reaction, from arrogant prelacy, and the despotism of national churches.

It was the inevitable product of evil times—the child of oppression, and the nurseling of persecution. But, destitute as it is of permanent reasons, and unsupported by ancient authority, and incompatible, as it must always be, with the just and necessary influence of the ministers of religion, it will give way when the accidental causes to which it owes its origin are removed. Deprived of the invigorating disadvantages of political depression, congregationalism will slide into some form of comprehensive polity. When the mass ceases to be agitated, crystallization will commence. That this system should prevail, and be in favour, where democratic sentiments and tastes are rife, can be no matter of surprise; but the fact of its prevalence under such circumstances surely must not be urged abstractedly, in its recommendation, or as a presumption that it is apostolic.

The historical evidence to the contrary is so abundant and conclusive, that no advocate is now likely to take up the argument on the ground of ancient practice. On any other ground of expediency, let it be defended, and adhered to by whoever is so minded.

Excluding then the arbitrary theory which insulates each congregation, and makes it a church; and assuming that the communion and organization of neighbouring congregations necessarily involves some species of hierarchical combination, we have to make a choice between

those two schemes which (small distinctions overlooked) embody the only general principles we can well have recourse to, that is to say, presbyterianism and episcopacy.

To decide between the two on the ground of the ancient usage of the Church, might seem an easy thing to those who are conversant with the Christian literature of the first three centuries. The broad concurrent evidence which favours the episcopal form of government may indeed (like every other kind of evidence on every sort of subject) be excepted against in particulars, or be evaded, or rendered seemingly ambiguous, by cross circumstances. But still, those who read church history purely as HISTORY, and who care little what present interest it may favour, will not, we imagine, hesitate to conclude that, nine out of ten of the churches of the first century were episcopal; or that nineteen out of twenty of those of the second century, and almost all of the third, acknowledged this form of government. The ORTHODOXY of the great mass of Christians in those ages, and their EPISCOPACY, are two prominent facts, that meet us, directly or implicitly, on almost every page of the extant remains of those times. The same method of quotation, and the same misrepresentation of evidence, which enabled the ingenious author of the 'History of Early Opinions' to throw a shade over the first of these important facts, may enable an opponent of

episcopacy to put us in doubt concerning the second. But no method sanctioned by truth and honesty will do it.

On the other hand, if a choice were to be made between two ACTUAL FORMS of presbyterianism and of episcopacy, whereof the first admits the laity to a just and apostolic place in the management and administration of the Church, while the second absolutely rejects all such influence, and at the same retains, for its bishops, the baronial dignities, and the secular splendour, usurped by the insolent hierarchs of the middle ages; then indeed the balance would be one of a difficult sort; and unless there were room to hope for a correction and reform of political prelacy, an honest and modest Christian mind would take refuge in the substantial benefits of presbyterianism.

The two systems may however very properly be put in comparison on abstract ground; and then the condition of the two schemes will appear to be very nearly the same as those which belong, in questions of civil government, to the monarchical principle, as compared with any of those oligarchical or republican constitutions that are resorted to as safeguards against despotism.

Monarchy and episcopacy may be considered as the forms into which the social system will spontaneously subside: republicanism (in any of its modes) and presbyterianism, are those forms in

which we stop short, when we do not think it safe to commit ourselves to the former. The latter is a cautionary proceeding, in which certain acknowledged advantages are foregone, on account of the dangers that attend the enjoyment of them. But could we find the means of averting those perils, we should then no longer scruple to embrace the benefits of the more natural and efficient method. A limited monarchy, and a well counterpoised episcopacy, would probably engage the suffrages of the majority of mankind, rather than any modification of the aristocratic, oligarchic, republican, or presbyterian principle.

Could the highest wisdom and virtue be found in individuals, even absolute monarchy might well be preferred to any of the operose systems that come in its room. The sternest republican might grant that monarchy is the ideal of perfection in government;—assuming only the competency and the disinterestedness of him who is to wield the sceptre. We refrain from this simple and efficient mode, only because we can no where find the man to whom so much power might be confided. Or, if we could find one such man, we could not hope to secure him a successor. The cumbrous machinery of senates, councils, ministers, conventions, representatives, is all so much precaution—not abstractedly good, yet indispensable on account of

the imperfect virtue and the imperfect wisdom of men, singly.

Those general motives which would lead to a preference of monarchy, do indeed hardly come into play where the interests in view are of a very simple kind. Commercial projects and pecuniary advantages may be well enough managed by a committee; but it is not so where energy, promptitude, and secrecy are peculiarly demanded; and still less so, where high sentiments are involved. In these instances, monarchical government is not to be renounced without incurring some serious, or perhaps fatal disparagement. We may think ourselves safe from despotism in the hands of a committee; but we are safe to no purpose. An army is confided to the head and hand of a single captain, not merely that its movements may have the celerity and the consistency of purpose which spring from a single mind; but because the feeling and the soul that are to propel the mighty mass, demand a centre, in the person of the chief, and would never, in an equal degree, converge upon a council of war, or a directory.

So long as a nation's welfare is held to turn upon nothing but its sheer arithmetical interests, a committee, or a senate, may properly have the charge of them. But if regard is had to those higher and more impulsive principles of

national greatness which are in no way to be reduced to mathematical computation, then it is found, and especially so in extensive empires, that monarchy, with its attendant splendours—monarchy, vivified by the free exercise of large prerogatives, and reared on the shoulders of an illustrious nobility—monarchy, not born yesterday, and the creature of the populace, but the child of time, and the favourite of history—such a monarchy forms a centre of feeling, and imparts movement to sentiments of the highest importance, and which have little play within the dead machinery of a republic.

One class of sentiments being substituted for another, and then the analogy will hold good in relation to the Church. That system which places a living centre as the personal object of reverence and love in the room of a presbytery, or a convocation, secures an advantage which, so long as human nature remains what it is, ought to be esteemed of the highest price. It is granted indeed that ecclesiastical business may be managed efficiently, and economically, and equitably, by a presbytery; but it is affirmed, on the strength of the known motives of our nature, that such a management foregoes benefits of a refined sort, which spring up around a patriarchal chair. Let all the abuses and corruptions belonging to the history of proud prelacy in all ages be summed up, and they will fail to invalidate the assertion that a

paternal sway vivifies the system over which it is exercised in a manner not to be attained by the government of a corporation. All we have to do is to place the monarchical power under reasonable limitations.

If sentiments of the higher sort are important in things secular, they are vastly more so in things spiritual. Christianity is not a system of palpable interests, to which cold calculation is applicable; but a scheme of elevated emotions. Whatever calls forth and gives play to sentiment, is presumptively more Christian-like than that which, with a dry caution, merely guards against abuses. But we may go further, and affirm, that Christianity, fully brought to bear upon human nature, and allowed to draw into its service all gifts, and talents, natural and divine, will spontaneously tend to the episcopal model.

The current of popular opinion may indeed set against this or that general principle; and yet nature (we should say the Divine Providence) goes on in its course, notwithstanding the temporary infatuations of mankind. Often have the purest enjoyments, and the most solid advantages, been renounced by the proud impatience, or the sheer caprices of communities — by absurd and vicious fashions, or sophistical opinions. Popular distastes then, afford no presumption whatever against the system which they repugnate. Episcopacy may

be abstractedly good, although all the world were to scout it.

Now any number of religiously gifted persons being taken promiscuously, we shall not fail to find among them those marked inequalities of natural power, and those decisive diversities of temper and accomplishment, which speak loudly (as loudly as Nature ever speaks) in favour of a corresponding distribution of services, and gradation of employments and dignities. To assign to all the same duties and to reduce all to the same level, is to affront reason and nature in an egregious manner. The Church needs services to be performed, not of one kind, but of many; and nature actually provides persons adapted to that diversity of service. Among fifty or a hundred clerical persons, some will be found whose bold and ardent zeal calls them into the field of labour and danger in carrying the Gospel upon new ground; some, whose taste for intellectual pursuits, and whose faculty of acquisition, mark them for the closet, or for the chair of catechetical instruction; some, whose powers of utterance and flow of soul challenge them for the pulpit; some, whose gentleness of spirit, and whose placid skill, fit them for the difficult task of the personal cure of souls; some, whose philanthropy and self-denying love forbid them to be happy any where but among the poor and wretched; and some, moreover, although it be a few, whose

calmness of judgment and temper, whose comprehensiveness of understanding, whose paternal sentiments and personal dignity, declare them, without mistake, to be destined to the throne of government. We may decry episcopacy; but the Lord sends us bishops, whether or not we will avail ourselves of the boon.

The Church has great need to use a much more wise economy of the various talents committed to her trust than any existing religious community exercises. On all sides, there is a most wasteful neglect of diversified abilities. Systems which, for the saving of some fond hypothesis, confound all natural distinctions of temper and power, and enforce an equality of rank, and an identity of employment upon all official persons, obstruct the common benefit, and hinder the progress of the Gospel, in a degree not to be calculated. The economy of powers, and the division of labour, is no where more imperatively needed than within the Church. The stagnant condition of Christianity in countries where no external opposition has stood in its way, may, in great measure, be attributed to this same prodigal disregard of the dictates of nature and common sense. To take a band of gifted persons—gifted in as many different ways as there are persons, and to compel each to be a bishop, and every thing else, within his little sphere, is an infatuation not matched in any other department of human affairs. The

men of this world are indeed wiser than those children of light who adhere to so marvellous a practical error.

A youth, for example, whose blooming talents might, in a proper and subordinate sphere, be highly serviceable to the Church, and who, after a long training under his superiors, might rise to greater things, is snatched from his academic themes, is made teacher of what he has barely learned, and constituted ruler of affairs he cannot grasp, is pronounced bishop—and apostolic church order is deemed to have been realized!

Whatever may be ambiguous in the Pauline epistles, this surely is prominent, and unquestionable, that the apostle—always remarkable for his prompt good sense, and his respect for the actual constitutions of nature, recognizes the diversity of gifts and powers, and supposes that this diversity, which springs from the Sovereign Wisdom, is to be turned to the best account possible in promoting the great and various purposes of the Gospel. We need ask for no other argument in favour of episcopacy. Many have the gifts requisite for the ordinary duties of a Christian teacher; not a few may beneficially administer the interests of a small circle; but it is only a few—yet there are such, who can sustain the burden of extensive government. The several parts of our argument converge here upon our conclusion.—

If the Christians of a city or district are numerous, and constitute many congregations, these congregations must be combined under some fixed system of organization.

An organization of many congregations includes the association and co-operation of all clerical persons within such a circle, or diocese.

The combination of clerical persons, their concord, the distribution of services, and the apportionment to the highest advantage of their various talents, demands a centre of control, and an efficient administrative authority.

We may, it is true, stop short in a government by a council, or committee, or presbytery. But we do better in following the indication of nature, and the analogy of civil affairs, and in placing the supreme administrative power in the hands of a Father and Shepherd.

Such, as we cannot doubt, was the practice of the primitive Churches.

SECTION V.

FIRST STEPS OF SPIRITUAL DESPOTISM.

After excepting the changes that distinguish the later from the earlier Judaism (referred to in a preceding section) it may be affirmed, that Christianity is the only religion known to history which has undergone and survived extensive and essential alterations. Other systems have had their season, and then have been swept away, leaving hardly a wreck behind. But the religion of the New Testament, after passing, by insensible degrees, into a condition which scarcely retained a point of resemblance to its primitive state, has returned upon itself, and has renewed its youth like the phœnix.

Four inferences, and each of them important, may properly be drawn from the fact of the corruption and renovation of Christianity: the first is an inference confirmatory of its truth; inasmuch as it is truth only that is liable to corruption; and truth only that possesses an intrinsic vigour, enabling it to regain its pristine purity. The second of these inferences is of a

serious sort, and compels us to admit that the religion of Christ, although true and divine, has not been exempted, by the interposition of Heaven, from the operation of common causes; but has been left to be corroded, broken down, and adulterated, in every way which the passions and folly of mankind have prompted. The third, leads us to attribute the corruption of Christianity to its real causes—the bad passions and errors of its adherents, which were at work upon it from the first moment of its birth; and should preclude the mistake of fixing upon certain special events, in the external history of the Church, or upon the agency of individuals, as in any high degree efficient in producing that corruption. Our last inference should inspire every Christian mind with a salutary fear, lest that which has happened once, and which the great principles of the Divine government did not prevent, should happen again. No symptom, perhaps, would be more ominous of the recurrence of a season of decay and perversion, than a prevailing confidence that it is impossible it should take place, and that it is idle and absurd to suppose it in any degree probable.

Christianity received upon itself, at length, the full impression of the evil influences which it came in to remedy;—in a word, it became such as human nature would have it. In this perverted condition we find it at the end of five hundred years, if not earlier. In attempting to

trace the perversion backwards, from its mature to its incipient state, we meet with no marked stations, where we might stop short, and say—at this point truth gave way, and error took its start. Nothing decisively arrests our progress; and it becomes inevitable to conclude, in the language of Scripture itself, that the hidden mischief did "already work," while yet the apostles were planting the Gospel.

We hold it then quite impracticable to mark, with any precision, the eras of the growth of superstition, and its attendant despotism. In truth, the practice of apportioning the revolutions of time into epochs, is very delusive, and always proceeds upon the ground of some hypothesis, for the elucidation and establishment of which an arbitrary and artificial form is imposed upon the course of events. Such distributions are seldom, if ever, in a just sense philosophical, and ought, if resorted to at all, to be advanced with due notice, as mere arrangements, made for convenience' sake, in compiling history, and for the ease of the reader's memory.

It is in this way only that we now propose to mark out stages and eras in the history of spiritual despotism; not as if its advances were in fact well defined; but because, without some sort of classification, a subject so vast and various is not to be reviewed; and certainly not to be spoken of in the cursory manner which our present plan demands.

Our first broad era is that during which church power was making its preparations, and consolidating its means, and tending towards a position whence the transition was easy to the acmé of unbounded despotism. This period commences, it must be admitted, in the apostolic age; and may be carried down, indefinitely, into the fifth century. A greater error can hardly be fallen into than that of fixing upon the date of the edict of Milan, as the initial point in the history of church power, as if usurpations and corruptions then took their start; or as if the story of sacerdotal ambition then opened its first chapter. Popularly speaking indeed, the conversion of Constantine, and of the imperial court, presents itself as an era in the history of the Church, and was no doubt an event of signal importance. But when we look intimately at the state and progress of sentiments, and the condition of the several orders within the Church, it is found that the efficient causes of the perversion that was going on, were very slightly affected by the political change that had happened; nor can we perceive that the advance of any corruption was, in consequence, sensibly accelerated.

The second epoch is that which is characterised by the critical oscillation of spiritual power in counterpoise with the civil authority;—the Church, awaking to a consciousness of its strength, yet feeling its need of support,

and alternately crying for succour, accepting favours, and making trial of its independent power to resist or to subjugate the secular authority. On the other hand the emperors, embarrassed by their fruitless endeavours to compose the feuds of the Church, and baffled in their attempts to bring the new and mysterious power into harmony with the movements of government, pursued a devious course, undetermined by any fixed principles, and therefore tending, by its very ambiguity, to favour the steady advances of the Church. This period may be assigned its termination when the breaking up of the western empire left the Roman hierarchy to entrench and extend itself at leisure over the wide field of desolation.

The third period, commencing with the acknowledged supremacy (or at least independent rights) of the Church, reaches through a track of seven hundred years, and might well be designated the dog days of spiritual despotism. The scorching heat was at its height in the eleventh century.

The fourth period embraces the time through the course of which a reaction was taking place within the social system, ending in the expulsion of the old despotism from several of the European nations, its mitigation in others, and in the substitution of that mixed spiritual and political tyranny, which has, at length, given way before

the advance of just and liberal opinions on the subject of religious liberty.

After taking a hasty view of these several eras, it will remain to notice certain refined modern forms of religious intolerance; and also to make good the allegation, That the proper and salutary influence of the ministers of religion is at present labouring under serious disadvantages, and requires to be restored to a firm foundation, and to be raised to a higher stage.

A century occupies a small space in a chart of three thousand years; but it is a long period in relation to human affairs. A century completely substitutes one set of men for another; and it may witness, if not a total change of manners and usages, yet an opposite direction given to the current of opinion, and a new character imparted to the sentiments of mankind. The century commencing with the death of the apostle John, and ending with that of Irenæus, included great changes in the condition, temper, and usages of the Christian community. These changes we find to have actually taken place; but we are destitute of the means of clearly tracing them to their causes, and of following them in their progress. It is here that the church historian is at fault: it is here that we have to regret the loss, or want, of materials which, did they exist, would probably furnish

more practical instruction than is presented in the history of the five centuries following. It is easy to understand the march of evils when once in full course; the mystery is in their rise.

After this first century, the history of the Church is not obscure; and it is almost indifferent what date we fix upon, between the accession of Trajan and the death of Diocletian, as a point of view, whence to contemplate the general condition of the Church. In truth, if a much later time were included, we should not find it distinguished from the earlier era by any such decisive characteristics as might be supposed.

In reviewing this first period, we must have recourse to the aid of some classification of topics, and consider—1st. The relative position of clergy and laity: 2d. The relative position of the several orders of the clerical body: 3d. The relation between the Church and her internal opponents; or heretics and schismatics of every name: and 4thly. The relation between the Church and the world—that is to say, the mass of mankind, and the civil power specifically.

First, then, for the relation which appears to have subsisted within the Church, between the ministers of religion and the people at large, or as we say, clergy and laity.

At a first glance it might seem as if popular influence had been extended and confirmed

rather than diminished in the interval between the apostolic age and that (for instance) of Cyprian, inasmuch as the voice of the people in the election of their bishops and presbyters was then admitted in a way of which we hear nothing in the canonical records. But this advantage was not substantial; or was more than balanced in other modes. We do not insist upon those reasons which may lead us to think that the popular suffrage had been commonly reduced to a mere matter of form, or that, like the power of the mob in our modern elections, it had no existence except during a few tumultuous days, and was merely the hurricane of an hour. Be this as it may, it is clear that religious opinions had undergone an insensible, though important change, and such as threw into the hands of the clergy a power not thought of by the simple minded apostles, or their immediate coadjutors and successors.

The political usages of a community are of far less significance than the notions that pervade it; now if the usages of the Church, in the third century, had become more democratic, its sentiments and opinions favoured spiritual tyranny in an immensely greater proportion. Those great and consolatory truths on which all stress was laid by Paul, John, Peter, and James —truths of rational import, and of elevating influence, though not denied or forgotten, had sunk into a secondary place in favour of notions

which attributed unutterable value, and a mysterious efficacy to the Christian ceremonies. Here we trace the first footmarks of clerical encroachment. The administration of the sacraments was the inviolable prerogative of priests; and these symbols, rather than the great principles they held forth, were insisted upon as of vital energy: it was upon touching, tasting, handling, the material elements, or upon being duly touched and handled by the dispensers of the 'mysteries,' that eternal life depended. Not to be washed in the laver of regeneration, not to eat of the divine flesh, not to drink the blood, not to be anointed with the oil of remission, was to perish everlastingly. Salvation and perdition turned, not upon the condition of the heart in God's sight; but upon having a share of the consecrated fluid or solid matter which the priest might bestow, or might refuse.

That transition of sentiment, or of doctrine, which obscured the great and rational truths of the Gospel, and which magnified the mere symbols of those truths, we have no satisfactory means of following; but the result, after a little while, is most conspicuous, and its effect operated, all in one direction, to enslave the spirits of the people and to place the clergy in a position where every thing was at their command. The maturing of spiritual despotism wants little more of means and instruments, than it finds in this substitution of superstition and ceremony

for vital truth, which had taken place while yet the Church was bleeding under the hand of imperial persecutors.

Having many other points in view, our limits forbid our prosecuting, what indeed would be an instructive inquiry, concerning the rise and advance of these superstitions; but it is proper here, in the most distinct manner, to point them out as the sufficient springs of that extensive despotism which at length fastened itself upon the western nations. If there are those who allow themselves to believe that the political triumph of Christianity in the fourth century, and the alliance between Church and State, then effected, were the causes, and the initial means of the papal usurpations, let them do themselves the justice of looking into the writers of the third century, among whom they will find the most abundant evidence of that corruption of sentiment which, wherever it prevails, plants the foot of the priest upon the neck of the people. We must in charity impute extreme ignorance to those who have professed to think that the political establishment of Christianity was the cause of its corruption.

In examining the writers of the succeeding age, and at a time when the ministers of the Gospel sat in the high places of worldly power, we meet with the same superstitions, and in that gradually maturing state which might be expected. But there are few, if any indications of

a ripening or expansion of them, hastened by the altered external circumstances of the Church. For aught that appears, Ambrose of Milan, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Martin of Tours, would have magnified the superstitions of their times with as much zeal and success if the emperors had continued pagans, as they did while court favour shone upon their heads.

So long as the great duty of Christian ministers was to teach and enforce PRINCIPLES OF BELIEF, which all are alike to enjoy and to imbibe, and which, when once received, are (at least so far as the teacher is concerned) an unalienable possession, these teachers stand upon a ground of reasonable equality with the people. But the relative position of the two parties is at once, and essentially changed, when the priest pretends to have something, and something mysterious, to *bestow*, from day to day, as well as something to *teach*; and when he may, at discretion, bestow or withhold the inestimable and indispensable boon. This essential change of position we find to have taken place long before Constantine comes upon the stage. Spiritual despotism had already laid the broad foundation of its power when the blood of Cyprian stained the sands without the walls of Carthage.

Every superstition, as well as that relating to the sacraments, had the same tendency to throw into the hands of the clergy a power which

continually widened the interval between the people and their ministers; and in observing the rapid growth of some of these errors, it is hard to resist the belief that they were wittingly promoted, and craftily sustained, by the clergy, with an express view to the enlargement and consolidation of their influence. The natural growth of superstition is like ivy on the wall; but the superstitions of the early Church ran like the gourd upon the ground, and we must needs suppose that their spread was hastened by artificial means.

Of this sort were—the oblations for the dead—the festivals of the martyrs—the doctrine (and the practices consequent upon it) concerning demoniacal possession; and the principles and spirit of asceticism, each of which, as might easily be shown, secured for the priest, in one manner or another, a discretionary power, and a cringing reverence, altogether unlike any thing claimed by apostolic pastors. All this while every thing, within the Church, was purely spontaneous: the ministers of religion were doing nothing but what the ministers of the most obscure and independent sect might do. The tendencies of human nature were taking their own course.

And yet no scheme of encroachment advances far without meeting with some cross influence, or unmanageable force, that disturbs its measures. So it was in the early Church. The clergy, by flattering the spiritual vanity of the ascetics,

and by exaggerating, in the most fulsome terms, the merit of celibacy and maceration of the flesh, had brought over to their side, pretty generally, the monkish bands; and these, non-sacerdotal as they were, rendered the most important aid to the clergy, in relation to the people, by imposing upon the latter a humiliating sense of their own spiritual inferiority, as implicated in the defilements of common life. So far all went well.

But, by a mere accident of the times, there sprung up another non-sacerdotal class, which was not to be brought into subserviency to the clergy, and which, in fact, proved itself refractory to an extent that convulsed the whole fabric of the Church. This class consisted of the Confessors, or those who, in the recurrent seasons of persecution, had manfully sustained, and had survived, tortures; and who, on the ground of the incalculable merit they had won as the Lord's triumphant champions, assumed to themselves an irregular and unlimited privilege of contravening the established discipline of the Church, of reversing sentences of excommunication, and especially of restoring to communion those who, under the same fiery trial, had fallen and renounced the faith. The authority of the most highly esteemed, the most politic, and the most powerful prelates, and this authority stretched to the utmost, was, in many instances, defied and overthrown by the insolence of these spiritual Athletæ. The ascetics were, ordinarily,

men of a sluggish or timid temper, and yielded readily to the hand of power; not so the confessors; for the very resolution of spirit, and the physical hardihood, and immobility of nerve, which, often, had enabled them to conquer in the hour of pain, rendered them afterwards equally sturdy and invincible in asserting and maintaining the pernicious influence they had gained.

Whenever persecution broke out anew, a fresh band of confessors started up to trouble and beard the clergy. No provision could be made against these invasions; no means taken to avert the mischief they effected. Nor were these mischiefs temporary; for the controversies on the principles and practices of discipline which thence arose, gave birth to schism after schism; and occasioned most of those internal disorders that distracted the western Church through several centuries.

Clerical power was, we say, at first, obstructed and thwarted by these means; and yet the remote consequence was to enhance it. Nothing more effectually promoted, after a while, the encroachments of the hierarchy in the west, than the resistance it had had to encounter from the confessors, and their adherents. The bishops, feeling on these occasions that they still wanted much more power than they possessed, for the purpose of carrying their measures, and of overruling opposition, set themselves deliberately to the work—a work which the holders of power

easily pursuade themselves is a holy and beneficial one, of consolidating their authority in every possible mode. The rapid advances of spiritual despotism we might date from what is termed the seventh persecution, and the episcopate of Cyprian.

We should not fail to mention the very important influence which the custom of holding provincial and general councils had in affecting the relative position of the clergy and laity. To this subject we must revert when speaking of the relative dignity of the several orders of the clergy; but the first and most marked result of the practice of transferring every considerable controversy, whether doctrinal or ecclesiastical, from the Church where it originated, to a convention of bishops, was, of course, at once to cut off the people from all control over such discussions, and virtually to deny them the right of entertaining a free opinion on the subject of debate. The holding of a council, or the establishment of a representative system, must not be reproved as in itself improper or inexpedient; but the spirit and practice of apostolic Christianity imperatively demanded, in such cases, that the laity, by their own representatives—that is, by some of themselves, and in a due proportion of numbers, should have been called to attend the convention; and when there, should have been allowed to exercise some efficient powers. The sending of the bishop alone,

or the bishop and some few of his clergy, to represent the Church in the council, and thence to bring home canons and decrees, not to be discussed, but obeyed, was an innovation and a usurpation, fatal as well to the liberties of the people, as to the purity and spirituality of religion. The laity, if not often qualified, by theological accomplishments, for taking an active part in debate, are at least qualified for swaying decisions after hearing of arguments, by that vigorous and untainted good sense, and by that fervent and simple piety, in both which the clergy are too often lamentably deficient.

If there had been no other cause at work to give rise to spiritual despotism, this alone would have been enough: we must assign the commencement of its operation to as early a time as the middle of the second century. There can be no security, no liberty, and scarcely any purity or vitality, in a Church which says to the laity, in mass,—'You have nothing to do with theology, but to receive what we teach you; and nothing to do with rules of discipline, or laws of administration, but to yield them obedience.' Under any such state of things we find the very essence of spiritual despotism; whether or not it be fully expanded.

It was only the natural consequence of the several causes we have mentioned, that the dignity and prerogatives of the clerical character should, at the same time, have been exalted and

affirmed in turgid language. Nevertheless these exaggerations, and the measures that attended them, were preparatives only to that matured state of things which gave to the sacerdotal order, at length, an absolute and undefined power over the mass of the people. What concerns us to observe is not so much the actual progress made in the early time of which we are speaking, toward spiritual despotism, as the fact —unquestionable as it is, that the preparation was really commenced, and was carried to a great length, long before the Christian community, within the Roman Empire, had received any kind of favour or support, beyond a transient and precarious indulgence from the State, and before the chiefs of the Church could have entertained a hope of the revolution that was at length to occur.

We have next to notice the changes which, during the same early period, gradually took place in the relative position, dignities, and prerogatives, of the several orders of the clerical body.

It is easy to mistake the accidental form of a tyrannical system, for the substance and principle of it. This error has very commonly been fallen into by those who have reviewed the history of the early church. True indeed it is, that hierarchical encroachments were pushed on by the immediate agency, and at the impulse of the

episcopal order: but episcopacy was the form only, not the essence of the spiritual despotism of the times. Oligarchies and aristocracies have been, to the full, as oppressive as monarchies. Yet it may be granted that despotism leans towards the monarchical form, and that under this form, though not always so, its advances are likely to be more steady and consistent than under any other.

The spiritual despotism which had reached a height in the fourth century was indeed episcopal in its model; but it is an illusion to suppose, either that episcopacy was its cause or reason, or that it would not have found place, if some other scheme of church government had prevailed. Episcopacy did prevail, not because it was selected as more conducive than any other system to the consolidation of church power; but because it had come down, with the authority of universal tradition, as the ancient, if not apostolic constitution of the Church.

No one conversant with the remains of Christian literature can think of affirming that the clergy, in that age, when it had lost its simplicity and become ambitious, deliberately formed itself upon the episcopal model, with a view to the more effectual and speedy attainment of its ends. Fix as early a date as we can, with any reason, for the commencement of such a machination, and we still find the Churches every where episcopally governed. Let us imagine that a

stern conviction of the divine authority of the presbyterian form, and of the absolute equality of teachers and rulers, had prevailed among the clergy; or let us suppose that the temper of the times had favoured this system, and had excluded any other; can we believe that, other things being the same, and the laity, in the one case as well as the other, being excluded from conclaves and councils, the presbyteries of Carthage, of Rome, or of Milan, would have shown themselves less arrogant, and less eager to accumulate honours and wealth, than were the actual bishops of those sees? We are much inclined to think the very reverse, and can easily imagine that, whereas the episcopal authority, in those places, was mitigated often by the personal mildness of individual bishops, and so the advance of usurpations was retarded; on the contrary, a perpetual corporation would have known no intermissions of ambitious encroachment, and would, with a remorseless intensity, have followed up every step, by a step still more bold.

Ecclesiastical writers, and even those personally attached to episcopacy, have, with a view as it seems to approve their impartiality, been forward to represent and to denounce the pride and the secularity of the bishops of the third and fourth centuries. This might be well; but the exposure of these evils should surely have been accompanied by the distinction to which we have adverted; and so, while bishops

were blamed, episcopacy should have been cleared.

Furthermore, it is quite necessary, for the purpose of ridding the argument of all that does not belong to it, to set off from our account of the hierarchical changes that took place, such of them, or such of their attendant circumstances, as followed in THE INEVITABLE COURSE of things, and which were by no means in themselves culpable, whatever might be the consequences that in the end flowed from them. For example: although it does not certainly appear that the actual number of offices distinguished by specific terms, was much greater at the commencement of the fourth century, than it had been at the close of the first; nevertheless these various offices had, in the lapse of time, naturally settled down into a permanent form, so that services which, at the earlier period, had been interchangeably performed, or at least had not been rigorously assigned to individuals, had, at the later period, come under a regular and carefully defined system of distribution; and had drawn to themselves severally their specific importance, and their relative dignity. Nothing could have prevented this sort of systemizing of functions: it results from the very nature of things, and must in all cases attend the handing down of a social economy from one age to another.

The change therefore from an unfixed to a fixed constitution of offices and ranks, although

its tendency was to favour the advance of the growing despotism, is in itself no proper object of blame; and in any parallel case, instead of indulging a morbid and fruitless jealousy against the consolidated and various offices of a hierarchy, the wiser course would be to bestow our pains upon the proper means of counteracting, or of balancing the despotic principle that may be so embodied. It is not five orders, or twenty, that makes a Church despotic; but rather the distribution among those orders, whether few or many, of irresponsible and uncorrected powers.

Again, the government of the Church being episcopal, whether by apostolic authority or not, nothing else could happen, under the actual circumstances of the infant and struggling sect, but that powers of all kinds should gather round each episcopal chair; and especially round those in the great cities. Eagerly was the bishop appealed to as arbiter among the brethren in adjusting their secular differences; gladly was he made the depositary of family secrets, and the guardian of orphans. None so proper as he to be the treasurer of public funds, and to his hands was often entrusted private property, in unsettled times.

Our own circumstances, surrounded as we are by every sort of legal provision, and public security, hardly admit of our properly allowing for that unavoidable course of affairs which, in the

ancient Church, threw at the feet of bishops much more influence and wealth than consisted, generally, with the simplicity, humility, and sanctity becoming their office. These dignitaries were, in a sense, the victims of the existing condition of the Christian community; and in fact we find not a few of this order lamenting the secular embarrassments by which they were oppressed, and sighing, though in vain, for liberty to devote themselves, without distraction, to their spiritual functions. In other instances men, eminently qualified by learning and piety for the government of the Church, earnestly and even passionately resisted the wishes of the people to raise them to that dignity, and pronounced the *nolo episcopari* in a tone that could not be thought insincere. It is extremely inequitable and uncandid to inculpate the bishops of the ancient Church, without discrimination, on the ground of that accumulation of secular and spiritual influence, and that influx of wealth, which none of them could have prevented, even if so inclined, and which many of them heartily deplored.

These distinctions and exceptions duly admitted, it yet remains certain, that the gradual influx of power and wealth upon a few ecclesiastical centres, and the consequent acceleration of the natural growth of authority, did in fact raise the metropolitans and patriarchs of the Christian world to an elevation not compatible, human nature being such as it is, with the meek-

ness and humility of the Christian temper. Man has not virtue enough to resist incitements so many and so efficacious. The best will probably become at length insolent, sensual, avaricious, intolerant. Nothing could happen but that corruption and profligacy, impudent hypocrisy, and knavery, should spread through the clerical order, when its chiefs occupied a station beset by every sort of seduction.

The wealth and power attached to the principal sees thoroughly vitiated the Christianity of the times, first, by widening so far the interval between the dignitaries of the Church and the mass of the people as to intercept all reciprocity of feeling between the shepherd and the flock; and secondly, by so widening the interval between one order of clerical persons and another, as imposed upon the lower a servile feeling, and imparted to them a cringing habit, and dissipated that sentiment of virtual equality, as brethren in Christ, which is, in the most absolute sense, necessary and proper among the ministers of the Gospel. A hierarchy is indeed the bane of piety, and a curse to a community, when its distinctions of rank are of such vast compass as to vilify the humbler clerical orders, and to compel them to shrink in conscious meanness from before the splendours of ecclesiastical dignity.

Though it was neither the cause, nor itself the substance of spiritual despotism, we must

yet arraign the exaggerated greatness of the episcopal order, and especially of the metropolitans (compared with the inferior clergy) as a principal accelerating means of maturing the tyranny that was at length to cover the western world.

The effect of the practice of holding general or provincial councils has already been mentioned in its relation to the laity. It should be adverted to also as it bore upon the several ranks of the clergy.

It appears then, that, although presbyters and deacons attended those occasional synods that were convened by bishops in their particular dioceses; it was the bishops only who met their metropolitan in the stated vernal and autumnal conventions; and the bishops only who were summoned to œcumenic councils. As well the constant as the extraordinary practice of the Church, therefore, established a broad distinction between the first and the second orders of the clergy; and it was a distinction arbitrary and impolitic in a high degree, as well as glaringly at variance with the usage of the apostolic Church. Churchmen must have renounced all respect for the example and injunctions of the inspired founders of Christianity, when they could exclude from deliberative assemblies, not the people merely, but the ministers of religion, and their colleagues in office.

When the bishops returned from these aristocratic conventions to their sees, bearing with

them authoritative determinations of religious controversies, together with general rules of conduct, or canons, and special decisions touching individuals; what was likely to happen? Let us suppose that the clergy as well as the people obsequiously bowed to the wisdom or the will of their superiors. This acquiescence in most cases could take place only because clergy as well as laity had already been so disciplined in servile and silent submission, that they knew no other law, and no other rule of right than the word of their spiritual masters. Despotism must almost have reached its height where the decrees of synods met with no resistance.

But on the contrary, we may imagine instances—indeed such frequently occurred, in which freedom of thought, or refractory impulses, induced some of the inferior clergy to call in question the theological dogmas, or the ecclesiastical regulations, of the prelates. This contumacy could not be winked at. The dissidents were reported to the next synod; the bishops felt their official honour touched; they of course sustained each other, and defended their common authority. Already all substantial powers were in their hands: opposition, after a struggle, was overcome, and the audacious presbyter and his associates were degraded. Yet this was not enough, for every such struggle suggested anew the necessity of exalting still more the divine episcopal prerogatives, of lifting the throne a step

higher, and of providing still more ample means for preventing, or for crushing similar revolts.

Thus it is always that despotic practices involve the necessity of still more arbitrary proceedings. It is not in the nature of things that any invasion of the rights of men should stop at a point of comparative moderation: if we wrong men, we must, in self-defence, go on to enslave them. The most horrible excesses of tyranny are coiled in the egg that is left, without noise or notice, to hatch in the sand by dragon Pride.

The synodic system then, such as it prevailed both in the east and the west, is justly named as a principal cause or means of the Spiritual Despotism which so early grasped the Christian world.

From the extensive subject of the monkery of the ancient Church we must abstain in the present instance, except so far as to point out, in passing, the initial steps of that intimate and potent ghostly tyranny which became at length a main stay of the papal usurpations, and which took its rise from the rules and practices of the monastery. Within the religious houses, at a very early period, the doctrine was generally maintained, that every member of the fraternity was bound, as he regarded his salvation, to expose his soul, with its inmost secrets, to the eye of his superior and spiritual father. Such was the principle peremptorily insisted upon by Basil,

the great promoter of the monastic life. The usage of confession, which suited well the habits and sentiments of those who had renounced all the ordinary motives of human nature, was insensibly stretched beyond the limits of the monastery, and was made to apply, first to the feeble and superstitious—to women, and to men of inert and servile temperaments, in the open world; and at length to all, without exception. But long before the time of this consummation of church power, the clergy had got possession of a most formidable and efficacious engine of government, by penetrating into the secrets of families, and by having at their command the alarmed consciences often of official and prominent personages.

On this invisible ground priestly despotism had gained a broad footing before the era of the political ascendency of the Church; nor were its advances, on this ground, sensibly accelerated by that event. For aught that appears, the practice of confession would have gone on extending its sphere, and deepening its hold of all minds, as rapidly and securely through another century of persecution, as it did during the era of security.

The preparations for extending and confirming this same despotism were again hastened forward by circumstances that arose out of the controversies carried on between the Church

and the numerous heretics and schismatics who assailed her.

There is no doubt that the consciousness of having at command the force of the State and the terrors of the sword, tends to inflame the dogmatism of a dominant religious body. But it is also true (although the fact may be less obvious) that the very consciousness of the destitution of any such means of enforcing submission, naturally operates with the chiefs of such a party to induce them to invent, or to insist upon abstract and transcendental notions of an intolerant kind; and thus to lay the foundations of ghostly power even wider and deeper than otherwise would have been thought of. So it is that we find the champions of the papacy, in later ages, and when the secular arm had been brought to be altogether subservient to the Church, looking back to the pages of Cyprian, for warranty in support of the lofty doctrines which then they had need of. Cyprian and his colleagues because unbefriended by the State; and because they could prop their power only upon opinion, had promulgated that very theory of intolerance which gave an appearance of reason and of venerable authority to the practices of a despotism that had all means at its beck.

We say the difficult part it had to perform in rebutting the thousand heresies of the times, drove the Church, almost involuntarily, upon despotic ground: at least it must be granted,

that nothing less than the general diffusion of the most enlightened principles—principles only of late clearly developed, could have preserved the chiefs of the Church from staying themselves upon doctrines essentially intolerant. The apostles indeed (divinely guided as they were) drew the line straight, between laxity and tyranny; but to observe that line, plain as it is, has required more simplicity of mind than any sect, in any age, has hitherto possessed. We must not then severely blame the early promulgators of intolerant sentiments. They seemed to themselves to be pursuing the only course on which the truth of God could be secured; nor could they forecast the horrible and sanguinary interpretation that would in the end be put upon the language they used.

The primitive Church, in truth, merits admiration, not merely on account of its constancy in maintaining the Gospel against its pagan adversaries, and through a fiery trial; but on account of its steady, consistent, and, on the whole, intelligent adherence to the great principles of Christianity, assailed as they were in turn, sometimes by audacious impieties, and sometimes by insidious sophisms. Scarcely had some impudent and extravagant heresiarch been confuted, when a crafty and adroit impugner of the faith started up, in the east or the west—at Alexandria, or at Carthage, to seduce the unwary, and to lead away the disaffected.

On these occasions, as the great works of the time, still extant, abundantly testify, the champions of the Faith did not fail to allege the authority of Scripture in opposition to the errors they had to refute. But, as supplementary to this main argument, they appealed, and in a forcible manner, to the manifest and unquestionable fact of a continued derivation of doctrines from the apostles, in the principal seats of Christianity. This appeal was, in itself, fair and conclusive; and under parallel circumstances would, no doubt, be made by modern parties. In the third and fourth century the line of tradition from the apostles and their immediate successors was not so far stretched as to have become attenuated, or unsafe to be relied upon. The succession of a very few elders, in each primitive Church, conveyed, orally, the doctrine of the first age to the third and fourth. Are we ourselves under any historical uncertainty as to the doctines held by the Reformers? and if these opinions were regarded as of ultimate authority, we should naturally appeal to the copious traditionary evidence which makes it certain what those opinions were. But in this case, the line is much longer than that which connected Dionysius, Origen, and Cyprian, with Ignatius, Clemens, and John.

The appeal to tradition, in refutation of heretical novelties, must not then be indiscriminately blamed. If we had found the early

Christian writers abstaining entirely from it, the uncomfortable inference would have forced itself upon us, that they were themselves conscious of a departure from the apostolic doctrine; or at least, that all continuity of opinion had been broken up. Yet, though allowable and proper, this appeal to tradition, without the greatest caution in the use of it, and the clearest distinction always made between such proof, and that drawn from the canonical writings, would inevitably open the way for a mode of argument essentially despotic. This argument was much more easily wielded by inferior minds than the scriptural evidence; it was, also, more to the taste of intemperate and dogmatic spirits; and it would therefore gradually supplant the other species of proof. Besides, as it was, even from the first, indefinite and variable, or at least unfixed; so must it have become, in the lapse of time, incessantly less and less trustworthy, and more and more open to abuse. The consciousness of this augmenting incertitude would, by the principles of human nature, lead to a more arrogant and noisy assertion of its validity. Thus, while its substance was inwardly crumbling away, the argument from tradition would be made to sustain, every year, a greater weight. But the very temper of despotism is generated, and its lawless proceedings are extended, whenever a power comes into the position to prop itself mainly upon what it knows and feels to be a rotten foundation.

Here again we find a main pillar of the Romish usurpation, of which the basement at least had been reared as early as the close of the third century.

Once more: after appealing, first to the Scriptures, in confutation of heretics, and next to the traditionary doctrine of the principal Churches, the leading champions of Christianity laboured strenuously, as well to sustain the constancy and allegiance of the mass of the faithful, as to inspire the contumacious with fear, by insisting upon the UNITY OF THE TRUE CHURCH, and by representing, in the strongest language, the sin and danger of separation from it. In this instance, as in the preceding, we are called upon to use some discrimination, and to check our rising censures.

The very expressions, and the identical arguments which, as employed by the sanguinary champions of the papacy, under Innocent III., excite our abhorrence and contempt, may be traced up to the well-intentioned defenders of the faith in the third century; and if we will only take the pains to transport ourselves, in idea, to that time, we shall see reason to confess, that the position then assumed was one natural for them to take, and not altogether unsubstantial.

Few points, if any, are more strongly insisted upon by our Lord and his apostles, as specifically characteristic of the Gospel, than the union,

communion, and love, among its adherents, which should be a sign to the world of its divinity. At the same time the sin and peril of those who cause divisions is seriously asserted. This doctrine therefore, and this commination, could not be overlooked by those who knew themselves to belong to the general body of the faithful, and who had to deal with refractory parties. But great care should have been taken in applying this principle, and its sanction, to particular cases: as for example.—

The unity of the Church, and the unbroken consent of the faithful, in the elementary matters of belief, can apply to the Church only so long as the word of Christ is freely diffused among the people, and his authority fully respected, in contravention of human creeds. Moreover, it can mean only the general concurrence of all believers (so respecting the authority of Christ) in relation to the great principles of Christian faith; and must by no means be mistaken for the decisions of certain assemblies, or synods, or of particular rulers, arrogating the right to speak in the name of Christendom. Nor again, must this doctrine of the unity of the Church be urged in support of particular interpretations, concerning which the best informed, and the most upright may differ; nor in defence of special usages or ceremonies, not enjoined in Scripture, and imposed by those who may happen to possess influence or power enough to carry their measures.

St. Paul makes an express provision for granting indulgence to those who, through weakness of faith, or excessive sensibility of conscience, cannot conform to the general opinion; and he secures the substance of church harmony and unity, by leaving ample room for that liberty of private judgment which cannot be invaded without crushing the human mind, and substituting the chains of despotism for the bond of peace and love.

But with the early defenders of ecclesiastical power, those we mean who belong to the pristine era, now under review, the Unity of the Church meant — that artificial concentration of actual influence which converged upon Carthage, upon Antioch, upon Alexandria, or upon Rome. It was not the consent of all believers; but the sense of Dionysius, of Cyprian, or of Cornelius. The communion of saints was not the affectionate correspondence and intercourse of all who held to the Head, and loved each other as members of Christ; but rather the visible fact of ecclesiastical submission to this or that metropolitan or patriarch. The form was taken for the substance; and those, in many cases, were treated as aliens and enemies, whose only crime was the calling in question some arbitrary determination of a self-constituted and irresponsible authority.

Strange it was that these bishops and reverend Fathers, removed only by two hundred years from the apostolic age, should forget the illegality

(if we may use the term) of the pretext on which they demanded the submission of their adversaries. The first Churches received decrees from two sources, namely—the lips of the apostles, whose absolute power as the Lord's commissioners was not questioned; or from councils, in which the brethren at large had their place and vote. But these bishops and metropolitans, although they still convened the people in their parishes, and left them a semblance of their primitive liberty, yet concerted every important measure, and discussed all controversies in synods, from which the greater part of the clergy even, as well as the people, were excluded. For a few of the Rulers of the Church to judge between themselves and their opponents, and to roll thunders over the heads of whoever resisted their authority, was nothing less than an outrageous usurpation. And yet it had not been by a bold thrust, or a leap, that this point of despotism had been reached; but by insensible degrees; and especially under favour of an inconsiderate application of genuine principles to particular instances.

'Out of the Church there is no salvation.' Let this be granted; but who is out of the Church? Is it those whom Hildebrand may have excommunicated, or whom Gregory the Great may have cursed, or whom Syricius may have condemned, or whom Lucius, or Stephen, or Sixtus, may have denounced as heretics

and schismatics? We must refuse to admit this rule, as well in its earlier, as in its later applications; and the sentence of eternal damnation, if impiously despotic when pronounced by a pope that was master of the world, was so, not the less, when uttered by a pope who the next day might be called to exchange the mitre for the martyr's crown.

A man must stand firm indeed who is neither drawn nor driven from his position by a fierce assailant. The early defenders of the faith did not so know their proper standing, or so adhere to it, as to maintain the ground where they might at once have saved themselves, and the truth, without detriment to the liberties of mankind. In fact they hastened to entrench themselves within the lines of absolute despotism. The operation of the several controversies, whether doctrinal or ecclesiastical, that were carried on previously to the holding of the council of Nice, may very readily be traced, first, in bringing to maturity general arbitrary principles of church government, and then in inducing the Churches of the west, and of northern Africa, to yield themselves to the pretensions of the bishop of Rome, as St. Peter's successor, and the rightful arbiter of Christendom. The doctrine of the unity of the Church, so necessary in rebuking schismatics, seemed to demand a visible concentration of all Churches upon some one point; and there was no centre so naturally

looked to as Rome. If the rise of the papal tyranny is to be sought for, assuredly we must not stop short either in the acts of Theodosius, or in the concessions of Justinian; or in the machinations of this or that holder of the keys; nor, in fact, any where, till we reach those bold and ambitious sentiments of the third century, which may be found covertly expressed in the tract, 'De Unitate Ecclesiæ,' and in the epistles of its author—the fervent and pious Cyprian, and in those of several of his episcopal contemporaries and colleagues.

Although there were no evidence of another kind, we should yet have, on this ground, what is ample and conclusive in proof of the assertion, that, long before the era of the political triumph of Christianity, and while all the movements of the Church were as purely spontaneous as can be imagined, ecclesiastical power was condensing itself upon a centre, and had made great progress in digesting those arrogant principles, and in establishing those servile and superstitious usages, which the papacy of the twelfth century brought fully to bear upon the constitution of society throughout Europe.

It now remains, and in the last place, cursorily to review the position of Christianity, or shall we say, the Church, in relation to mankind at large, and to the Roman government, during the early period of which we are speaking.

But, indeed, though concerned in this section with the first three centuries of Christian history, especially, it is impracticable, in reference to a matter so indefinite as is the general temper and the intellectual and moral condition of mankind, to mark off eras with any precision, or to say whence a certain disposition of the minds of men took its rise, or when it gave place to another. Facts of this class, although in a broad sense conspicuous and unquestionable, are not to be traced in lines and colours upon a chart of history.

Our present topic, although by no means new to historical inquiry, has not perhaps been duly and impartially considered. The spiritual power which, taking its spring from Christianity, availed itself of those mighty forces which nothing but truth can supply, spread its scorching beams over the world, and rose to the zenith, because the heavens—political as well as intellectual, had been deserted, and did, as one might say, ask to be again occupied and ruled; there was a vacuum; and the Church filled it. From the age of the Antonines (not to name an earlier time) and onward, in slow but regular progression, as far as to the depth of that night which at length covered Europe, the human mind, in every sphere of its exercise, was failing, and decaying, and collapsing. During the same time, and no doubt under the influence of many of the same causes, the life of the vast political system of the

western world sunk apace, and its coherence became every year more feeble. Church Power, therefore, stepped into the room of all other kinds of power; it inherited the strength and the honours of every expiring supremacy; and, in turn, as every authority, and as every virtue died away intestate, without leaving a natural successor, the Church came forward to administer to the effects of all; she grasped all; and became at length the sole mistress of whatever she thought worth possessing.

Now it would be easy to maintain, consistently with many facts, two or more opposing theories on this subject; as for example: one might very plausibly trace the degeneracy of the human mind, and the decline of the empire, the extinction of science, the corruption of manners, and the fall of the state, severally to those various political and natural causes that are known to have borne upon the social system during this period of universal declension; and then it might be alleged that the Church, and we must mean especially the Romish Church, came in, as well to rescue, to preserve, and to transmit, no small amount of intelligence and of learning, as to hold the western nations in some sort of coherence, and to prevent the frightful anarchy, and to mitigate the utter barbarism, that must otherwise have prevailed. It may be said, and with some reason, nor have the apologists of the papacy forgotten to affirm, that the

Church, during a long era of disorder and general ignorance, stood as the guardian of manners, the preserver of literature, the just mediatrix between the strong and the weak; and, in a word, as the stay and refuge of whatever was salutary and important, and which, without her aid, must inevitably have perished. All this may fairly enough be advanced.

On the contrary, those who contemplate the revolutions of opinion from an opposite position, may allege, and may make it appear credible, that the general decay of intelligence, and the decline and fall of the empire, although hastened by other causes, were mainly brought about by the spread of a religious system that quelled all the active and energetic passions, that suffused through the social body, an effeminate and desponding temper, that overlaid both business and pleasure with gloomy and idle superstitions, and which, in a word, transferred to priests and monks the influence that heretofore had been exercised by soldiers and statesmen. A great part even of this allegation may be made good; but, as those who have advanced it have generally been impelled by a feeling more hostile to Christianity than to superstition, the distinction necessary to be observed between the two they have designedly neglected; and thus have thrown a capital fallacy into their argument.

The one of these theories, as well as the other, if advanced in a categorical manner, is

open to serious exception; or, at least, may so far be confuted as suffices for despoiling its advocates, severally, of the inference they would draw from it. Thus the Romanist can by no means make good his apology for his Church, inasmuch as he cannot disprove the charge, standing against her, of using her power for the worst purposes, and of exercising it in the worst spirit. If indeed the Papacy were inherently the protectress of humanity, and the patroness of knowledge, and the guardian of civil liberties, why, when the nations began to reclaim their liberties, and to awake to the calls of reason, did she so strenuously labour to quash both, and to maintain the ancient empire of ignorance? We conclude that the beneficial agency she had at one time exerted, was accidental, and altogether foreign to her proper views and general temper.

On the other hand, in rebutting the inference of sceptics, we readily grant that the refined superstition favoured by the Church from the third century, and onwards, had a very powerful influence in bringing on the degeneracy of the nations, and in accelerating the fall of the Roman empire. But then, we ask—was this superstition Christianity? when the affirmative is proved, we may feel ourselves interested in the question.

This subject ought not to be pursued on any supposition that assumes a single and exclusive cause. Fix on what general principle we may,

we shall find it to have been both cause and effect; or rather it will appear that causes and effects were intimately blended, and that they mutually affected one the other, in a manner that should preclude those simplifications of which theorists are fond.

To attribute the decline of taste and intelligence, and the decay of the Roman patriotism and power, to the influence of Christianity, abstractedly, is a calumny easily rebutted, on several distinct grounds. For, in the first place, this decay and decline, and especially the disappearance of those high sentiments upon which national greatness depends, had become conspicuous long before Christianity had gained any such ascendency as to enable it, in a visible manner, to affect the opinions and behaviour of the mass of mankind; and certainly not the upper and the educated classes. If Grecian and Roman philosophy and literature, and if the pristine republican energy and virtue had preserved their force and brightness to the time of Constantine, and then had suddenly waned, there would indeed have been reason to suppose that the new faith was the main cause of such a revolution. But the scholar well knows that, in regard to Roman literature, the Augustan splendour had long before been dimmed, and that, in relation to that of Greece, false taste, and a nugatory philosophy, had come in the place of Attic vigour and intelligence. Moreover

the historian knows equally well, that public and political virtue had, at the same time, and on both sides the Adriatic, been succeeded by the thorough corruption, and by those servile sentiments which are characteristic of extensive military despotisms. To throw the blame of this moral, mental, and political ruin upon Christianity, is to assign to it a retrospective influence, and to make the effect precede the cause by a century and a half!

Furthermore; in casting the eye over a biographical chart of literary and scientific men, the fact presents itself, beyond dispute, that, so far as learning, philosophy, and genius—eloquence and reason, survived at all, either among the Greeks or Latins, the Church might boast them mainly as her own. Was Christianity indeed the lethean cup that brought upon the human mind its sleep of ages? How happened it then that pagans were the first, and Christians the last—the last by two centuries, to exhibit its stupifying influence? Who are the pagan writers that can be named as recommending the ancient polytheism during that age when Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Basil, and the Gregories wrote and spoke? In admitting the decline of intelligence, we must, in all equity, save the fame of these and other illustrious men, of whom any age might be proud; and having done so, may grant that, whatever was not Christian, in that era, was, indeed effete.

Besides: when we come down to a later and a still more degenerate age, whatever influence the frivolous superstition of the times might have in promoting this decay, CHRISTIANITY is clearly exempt from the blame, inasmuch as it was no longer virtually extant, or not so extant as to retain its soul and power.

It is not then to any one cause, but to many, and these intimately commingled, that we must trace the gradual desolation, the withering, the blight, that at length overspread the once civilized world. Most of these causes have often enough been specifically mentioned; nor is it at all necessary to enumerate them here. Might we add to the list the mere hypothesis—it can be no more than a conjecture, of a periodic physical development and withdrawment—a rise and fall, of mental energy within the human system? It is at least difficult to review the fortunes of mankind, either on a great scale, or within particular spheres, without inclining to the supposition that there are natural cycles of intelligence, disturbed indeed by accidental causes; at one time lengthened, and at another shortened; but still returning, at not very irregular intervals; and in obedience to which the great community of nations, and nations individually, advance or recede on the course of knowledge and virtue.

Be this as it may; what we have to do with is the broad fact that those nations that once were bound together in the bundle of the Roman

empire, did at last fall into a state of anarchy and of degeneracy, such as allowed and invited the spiritual power to seize all kinds of authority, and to establish its usurpations on the firmest basis. This supervening church tyranny was, undoubtedly, and in many senses, a benefit to mankind. During the dismal nights and days of that general flood, the Church was the ark in which were conserved the rudiments of our modern liberties, civilization, and learning. This granted, we are then free to pass what judgment we think fit upon the spirit and temper of the ascendant power, and upon the conduct of the individuals who in succession held its sceptre.

But besides the relation of the Church to the moral and intellectual condition of the nations through its early era, there was a specific relationship borne by it to the Roman government; and we must now be understood to speak definitely of the second and third centuries; or the period during which both parties, that is to say, the Christian community, and the imperial court, had a distinct consciousness of each other as hostile powers.

We have already said that, whether persecuted or tolerated, a religious community, numerous, every where extant, internally organized, and sensitive through all its members, can never be looked at with indifference by any government. Let it be granted that principles of peace and

subordination pervade such a body; and moreover that, *to-day*, its feeling goes along with the government, and that its weight is thrown into the scale of the existing administration. But to-morrow changes take place; measures are proposed, or effected, which the religious community disapproves, or by which it thinks itself aggrieved, or endangered. Will it abstain then from using its conscious power? will it refrain from implicit threats? Spite of Christian meekness, spite of every motive to the contrary, nay, on the very ground and pretext of the highest motives, it will act as human nature, in such circumstances, impels; and the government, seeing things only in a common light, will find that it has to do with a powerful and an unmanageable internal enemy. A well-adjusted church-and-state polity recommends itself, in this special respect; not indeed as an infallible means of preventing collisions between the religious and the secular elements of the social system; but as an arrangement which provides against ordinary occasions of concussion, and as immensely better than the leaving two potent principles open to every casualty that may throw them rudely one upon the other.

The behaviour of the Christian community under the outrageous violences of which it was so often the victim, was, in most instances, unexceptionable and admirable. So much meek-

ness, so much respect for authority, such abstinence from retaliative conduct and vindictive expressions, on the part of a body, numerous and physically strong, and not always destitute of influence at court, affords convincing proof of the divine excellence and efficacy of the motives which the Gospel conveys.

Yet in their remonstrances with their furious enemies, the Christian apologists make a fair appeal to the fact of the patience and submissiveness, under intolerable wrongs, of a body of men numerous enough, if they chose to stand upon the defensive, to convulse the empire, if not to make their own terms. And they well said, 'If we were impelled by worldly and common motives, we should certainly judge it better to die sword in hand, than at the stake.'

This quiet, but significant allusion to their physical force, and to their organized power, naturally became more and more frequent and distinct; and whether openly spoken of or not, it was thoroughly understood, and keenly felt too by the imperial government. Perhaps indeed the political power of the Christians was rated higher by the court, that justly feared it, than by the Church that would not indulge the thought of actually using it. The circumstances of the Diocletian persecution (not to refer to any other) afford indication enough of what were the alarms, and what the desperate resolution of the imperial cabinet. These fears, and

this line of conduct, on the one side, must, in the end, have infused a corresponding feeling into the Church. The two powers were balancing, and mutually measuring their strength; and if the conversion of the court itself had not occurred when it did, nothing else seemed likely to happen, at length, but an open collision, and a general conflict.

How far this probable consequence was foreseen by Constantine, and how far a regard to it might affect his decision, we must not surmise; but it may be conjectured that he embraced the unconquerable doctrine, and bowed to the triumphant cross, only in time to prevent a universal convulsion; and perhaps an overthrow of the pagan ascendency.

But what we have here to do with is that interior and unuttered feeling, continually gathering force, which must have worked in the minds of Christians, and especially of their chiefs. The meekness of the Gospel not forgotten, and the express precepts of Christ and the apostles kept in view, it was yet inevitable that the political weight of the Church should be pondered, though in silence, and that the possibility of advancing, and of maintaining too, a just demand of tolerance, should be thought of. 'We *will not* use our power; but if we were to use it, justice must be granted to us.' Such was the language natural to men so cruelly and unwisely maltreated.

Now the meditation of political strength directly promotes its consolidation, and imparts to it a consistent and nervous energy. The rulers of the Church were the heads of a body, passive indeed in its principles, and submissive in its conduct; but yet conscious of its powers, and provoked to try them. Let it be granted that the habits of feeling, the sentiments, and the schemes, generated by these circumstances, actually remained in a quiescent state up to the moment of the accession of Constantine. But a deeply-working, an intense preparation of feeling had been made, which would at once expand and breathe, in a new manner, when the fortunes of the body took a happier turn. The high tones, the arrogance, and the intolerance of the Churchmen of the times of Constantine, Jovian, and Theodosius, were the outbursts of emotions, long pent up, and which had reached a vigorous maturity when first they made themselves heard in the open world. The gaudy and winged creature of the fourth century, had had its long chrysalis state in the third.

The part acted, the language used, the prerogatives claimed, by the Church under the first Christian emperors, must not be thought of as having sprung up fresh at the moment: this style was the product of the anterior season of oppression. In the insolent behaviour of certain ecclesiastics towards emperors and persons of high secular rank, one cannot but read the

vindictive sentiment—'Now is our time come for revenging the Church upon the State.' From its long schooling of persecution, the Church manifestly learned the ill lesson of intolerance, and instead of abhorring the usage and principle of cruelty, in religious matters, too soon desired to try the force of it in its controversy with heretics. It is a great illusion to suppose that the Christian community, admirable as was its behaviour, came forth from its three centuries of depression and suffering, unhurt and pure in its sentiments, as a political body. If we will not accept the open and active friendship of the secular authority, and if we reject a church-and-state alliance, we must have, in its stead, an ominous jealousy, and a murky turbulence (though repressed) which, if it never breaks out in civil convulsions, will not fail to nurse up a temper that will show itself internally, as a spirit of rancour and insubordination.

It remains to recapitulate the heads of the present section.

We have affirmed, and do not anticipate contradiction from those who themselves are conversant with the existing documents of church history, that the spiritual despotism, afterwards brought to a centre and made coherent in the papacy, had developed every one of its essential principles before the time of that political revolution which gave to the Church the aids of

imperial patronage; and while every movement was purely spontaneous, or in other words, while this power stood on the ground of spiritual motives, and stayed itself altogether on the fulcrum of opinion.

During, and within the limits of this same pristine era, we find the clergy to have gained upon the people at large the means of carrying despotism to any extent, by challenging to themselves the possession of, and irresponsible control over, certain awful elements indispensable to salvation, and in no other manner to be obtained but from the hand of the priest. The people moreover had been thrust from their place in the deliberative assemblies held by the rulers of the society. These two important changes, if there had been none other, were enough to open the way to whatever actually followed. In this sense the Church, in the age of Cyprian, was essentially despotic.

Again; by the gradual and inevitable aggrandizement of the episcopal order, by the consolidation and regular distribution of offices, and especially by the exclusion of the inferior clergy from provincial and general councils, a distance was interposed between the several orders of the Church, such as at once broke up the feeling of substantial equality that should subsist among the ministers of Christ, and gave the reins to the few, in a manner that could issue in nothing else but usurpation and tyranny—a tyranny always advancing. This power of the superiors

was, at the same time, making preparation for further encroachments, within the monastery.

Furthermore; the principles engendered, and the practices resorted to in consequence of the perpetual conflicts carried on between the Church and her heretical and schismatic opponents, placed her in a position essentially despotic; and induced a feeling which led her to catch at the first means that occurred of sustaining her authority by penal inflictions.

Lastly; these several preparations and advances of despotism were made during a course of time in which the vigour of the human mind was fast failing, and while the political structure was splitting and crumbling to its fall. Its ultimate ascendency, therefore, was little less than an inevitable consequence of the disappearance of whatever might have stood in its way.

Some few specimens of the evidence that might be adduced in support of the above positions, will be found at the end of the volume. But the author feels confident that his allegations, in the main, will not be called in question by any who are really qualified to express an opinion on subjects of this kind. It is indeed not unlikely that, from the pages of our modern ecclesiastical writers and church historians, sundry casual admissions and concessions may be culled, of an import opposite to the author's representations. But of what weight are such testimonies, in this instance? The facts

in question are—the temper and condition of the Christian commonwealth fifteen and sixteen hundred years ago: whence then should we seek our information? Is it from Tillemont, Baronius, Fleury, Cave, Usher, Burnet, Taylor, Bull, Hooker, Mosheim, Gibbon? These great writers, or if there be a hundred more of equal celebrity, and whatever might be the depth of their erudition, drew their knowledge of ecclesiastical antiquity from no other sources (there are no other) than those remains of christian literature which are still extant, and which now load our shelves, and are under our hand. Do they quote a single ancient author who has disappeared during the last two centuries? If not, we are to-day as favourably placed as themselves for acquiring the only information that has, in modern times, been within reach, or that is of any decisive value.

In discussions of this order it should be held a waste of time and labour, as it is an extreme impertinence, to quote modern authorities at all; and the author must protest against every sort of evidence of a secondary kind. What avails it, in such an argument, that Bellarmine, or Grotius, or Parker, or Stillingfleet, or Barrow, or Bingham, or Warburton, or Jortin, while intent upon some other question, or while seeking a casual illustration of a different position, have said and admitted so and so, concerning the primitive Church? If such admissions are vague

and general, they are scarcely worth turning aside to gather. If founded upon specific references to original authorities, we have those authorities under our eye, and do far better to peruse them for ourselves, than to look at detached portions of them through the chromatic telescope of writers of the seventeenth century.

The time was when the Fathers were read superstitiously, and were regarded as our masters in theology. They are now read intelligently, and as authorities simply in questions of history. Our predecessors (or some of them) followed the Fathers for guidance; we follow them for warning. It is in truth an auspicious omen of the present times, that an active and searching inquiry is on foot concerning the history of Christianity, in its early periods, and that this inquiry stops short no where, but in the extant remains of those very ages. Let the ignorant, and the indolent, and the frivolous, scout this diligence as idle; and let those whose opinions have long been crystallized on every subject, resent it as importunate or pernicious: but minds ardent and free in the pursuit of truth, will not, for a moment, be disheartened by any such rebukes. Consequences of the most momentous and extensive kind are not unlikely to spring from this anxiety to know the real history of our faith. It is by the aid of this sort of learning that we are set at large from the thralls of temporary and sectarian

recensions of Christianity: it is from this source that we draw an enhanced and profound regard to the infallible authority of Scripture; and it is also from studies of this kind that we may derive, if at all, sound and sober notions of those great principles of the Divine Government which bear upon the revolutions of religious opinion, and upon the rise and decay, the alternate corruption and renovation, of the elements of piety.

The author makes an apology to the reader for this digressive page.

SECTION VI.

ERA OF THE BALANCE OF THE CIVIL AND ECCLESIASTICAL POWERS.

ALTHOUGH it may appear in fact, again and again, that seasons of external prosperity have favoured the advance of abuses, and have promoted a worldly and ambitious spirit among Churchmen, we are by no means compelled, on that ground, to grant that Christianity, in the nature of things, can retain its purity only by the aid of sufferings and persecutions. In direct contradiction of any such melancholic principle, it is enough to allege the decisive and pointed instance of the apostolic Churches, of which it is affirmed, at a certain time, "that they had rest," in the stead of persecution, "and were edified; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." Worldly ease has had its evil consequences; and so has persecution. If there are certain abuses which we trace to the one, in the history of the Church, there are abuses also; and some of the most serious and fatal kind,

that are directly attributable to the other. Neither ease nor affliction, prosperity nor persecution, is good abstractedly, in relation to truth and piety; but both operate for the better or the worse, according to the actual state of the mind that comes under their operation. Far from being of opinion that religious prosperity, in the best sense, is to be looked for only as the product of storms, we allow ourselves to imagine, as not chimerical, a future era of spiritual life, and a general triumph of truth, which shall take its start from a smiling morning of general peace, and mundane felicity.

If indeed in any case, truth has already undergone serious perversion, and if its edge has been turned aside by immoral interpretations; if schemes of encroachment and extortion have been devised, and put in course, and if, in a word, the genuine simplicity and spirituality of the Gospel have disappeared, then no doubt it must follow that an exemption from trouble, and a liberty and facility in giving effect to such schemes, will hasten the advance of all that is mischievous. This is obvious; and such we find to have been the effect of each of those seasons of repose that were enjoyed under even the pagan emperors. Rest was injurious to the Church, because Christianity had lost its integrity.

The pernicious consequences that attended the imperfect and precarious prosperity permitted to

Christians from year to year, during the period of polytheistic ascendency, were not likely to be precluded, or to lose their evil efficacy, in that far more settled and genial summer time which followed the submission of the Roman Imperial Power to the Cross. What had happened under Alexander Severus, under Gordian, and under the Philips, would naturally happen also under Constantine and Theodosius. Superstition spread, debauchery among the clergy became more flagrant, and ambition and venality more impudent. But what is to be lamented or blamed in all this, is not that the Church was indulged with an exemption from trouble, but that it should have been in a state such as made every cessation of suffering dangerous and corrupting.

When we find these errors and unchristian practices increasing gradually, or even rapidly, after the political triumph of the Gospel, we are not to inculpate the incidental means of those unhappy perversions; but rather should look to the inner springs and reasons of them. Nor indeed was the growth of superstition, and of corruption, and despotism, in the age of Constantine, such as appears in certain strongly-coloured statements of it. Or let it have been what it might, it was balanced by the expansion of talents and merits of a new and high order. Little as the moderns may wish to take the divines of the fourth century as their masters, none who have conversed with them in

their writings will hesitate to grant them, in the main, as high a praise as belongs to any set of theologians, in any age. And in comparing the extant Christian literature of the fourth century with that of the third, the advantage is very far from being decisively on the side of the earlier authors, on the ground, either of piety, or of doctrinal consistency. The very reverse might readily be maintained.

The illustrious and imperial convert—the first Christian prince, behaved himself in his new relationship, as temporal bridegroom of the Church, in a manner regulated, in part, by the existing usages and principles of the Roman government; and in part by the usages and principles which he found prevailing within the vast and mysterious community to which he joined himself. He entered the awful temple of the true God, sceptre in hand, and as prince, conqueror, and patron; yet with a becoming reverence, and a disposition to comply devoutly with the orders and prescriptive modes of the system and worship of the sacred precincts. Constantine set his foot upon the threshold of the Christian Church with a feeling perhaps, not very unlike that which had belonged to certain chiefs of the pristine Roman arms, who, in making their way as proud victors to the fanes of a conquered nation, bowed to the humiliated divinity of the place, and hastened to prove that they

approached the foreign altar, not as destroyers, but as worshippers.

While considering the course pursued by Constantine, from first to last, in relation to the Church, we are bound to keep in view, on the one hand, his habits and maxims as a Cæsar; and on the other hand, the existing sentiments, and the ecclesiastical economy of the Christian commonwealth. If we are speaking of his personal merits, in his public religious capacity, nothing can be more inequitable than either to judge him by the rule we should apply to a modern European prince; or to assume, what is as far as possible from being true, that the Church was then fresh in her simplicity; or that the mass of the people (within the Church) were in possession of any substantial liberties; or that the political rulers of the body were still in a state to be spoiled, and to be taught the bad lessons they might learn at court, of ambition, intrigue, and cupidity.

The abstract justice of the emperor's measures, or their ultimate expediency, or their compatibility with the spirit of the Gospel, is one thing; but his personal merits, fairly regarded in the light of his age (not in that of our own) is quite another; and in this latter view there is reason to admire, as well the vigour and intelligence, as the moderation and equity of his public conduct. In those instances where his general

consistency gave way, or his temper failed, we may almost always trace his fault to the insufferable perversity, or the violence and contumacy, of the parties that opposed, or of those that advised him. He and his successors cordially desired, and laboured to promote, the universal ascendency of Christianity, as the only true religion. He and they, moreover, sought the peace of the Church, and its good order and unity. They felt that a religion, more potent in its influence over the minds of men than any other, and at the same time generating discords such as no other religion had presented, and which convulsed and endangered the state, demanded a watchful control, and needed the most vigorous measures to prevent its bringing about, at once, its own destruction, and that of the empire.

To reduce this vast system into a state of analogy with the machinery of government, to establish a good understanding between the civil and ecclesiastical authorities, and especially to repress, if possible, tumultuous and violent contentions, must have seemed to the Christian emperors their manifest duty, and their interest. Nothing less than the effecting of these several objects, could consist with the welfare of the vast society of nations for which they had to care. A complicated system of spiritual government they found already matured; although it was ill-organized, and in disorder, and a system essentially despotic. The first Christian

princes (like those of the Lutheran reformation) transferred powers and authorities from one centre to another; but did not despoil the community of any liberties then actually enjoyed. Constantine, or his sons and successors, might indeed hold a chain, and tighten it; but they did not forge one. The chain of spiritual despotism had been beaten and wreathed upon the anvil (or altar) of the non-established, voluntary, and afflicted Church of the third century.

Duly and equitably weighed, the public measures of Constantine, and of the more enlightened and upright of his successors, are liable to little blame, and may even challenge much praise. But the question is altogether of another kind, when we come to inquire into the abstract policy, or mere justice and lawfulness of these same proceedings. It has been the practice of a certain class of modern writers, first to assume theoretic principles in relation to external Christianity (and principles of a very questionable sort) and then to arraign the conduct of the Roman prince as amenable to that hypothetic rule; and especially have such writers assumed that the Church, at the moment of his conversion, was in the main free, pure, and unsophisticated. What more unfair or unfounded!

But we have done with the personal merits of Constantine, and the succeeding Christian emperors; and turn for a moment to their measures, abstractedly considered. Now even if it should

appear that these measures, or some of them, were essentially impolitic and pernicious (which is more than ought to be summarily granted) no such inference will follow, as that no public measures, or no state policy whatever, in relation to the Church, can be good and lawful. What if Constantine, upon ground so new and difficult, failed and went astray? Is it therefore certain that no safe path may be found over that ground? we think not; and must reject every general conclusion, drawn from the conduct and policy of the first Christian princes, against national ecclesiastical constitutions. If we reasonably decline to take these inexperienced princes as our masters and guides, in matters of church polity, we are, of course, exempted from every inference that might be drawn from the ill success of their actual measures. Our own may be better devised, and may be more conformed to the great and now well ascertained principles of political and religious liberty.

"The things that happened aforetime, are recorded for our learning, upon whom the ends of the world are come." If the first and the second grand experiments for the adjustment of the religious interests of communities, have failed, the course suggested, by such admonitory errors, is not to abandon so reasonable and necessary a work, or to leave uncontrolled that which must quickly run into confusion, if neglected; but rather to turn the errors of our

predecessors to advantage, and to do better, what they did ill. Sixteen or eighteen hundred years have not run out, as it were under our eyes, without yielding some definite and practical instructions. There is now no need that we should err, as our precursors have done, for want of experience. If the task of fitting the civil and religious machineries, one to the other, has hitherto baffled those who have attempted it, we may succeed better. We see the sources of failure; the false routes are laid down in our charts; and every kind of necessary information is fully at our command. Although therefore the entire church-and-state system, such as it subsisted in times gone by, should be adjudged faulty, we do not conclude that a church-and-state system is either undesirable or impracticable.

But in what did the first political establishment of Christianity under Constantine, and his immediate successors, actually consist? This subject, misunderstood and misrepresented as it often is, well deserves a little analysis. It has not been unusual, and especially of late, to talk of the Church, established under Constantine, as if it were the same thing, or nearly the same thing, as the Church established in these realms, or in other Protestant countries. No supposition can be more incorrect, not to say delusive: in truth, all reasoning from the one to the other of

two systems so dissimilar, must be unsound. The faults of Constantine's church polity, be they what they might, are not the faults of ours; nor did the precautions and limitations which attach to ours, belong to his. And again, the peculiar difficulties which, in the present times, and in this country, attend all ecclesiastical arrangements, had no existence, and were not to be provided for in that age. The very measures which, with the emperors, were resorted to for the regulation of church power, and which then must have been regarded as beneficial in their aspect toward the people, would, among ourselves, be denounced as either inefficacious, or as intolerable. What might be defensible, or even praiseworthy, in the policy of Constantine, or Theodosius, we justly condemn when imitated by our Tudors and Stuarts, and should resolutely resist if attempted in our own times.

Constantine's establishment of Christianity, in the first place, consisted in reversing all those prohibitory edicts of his predecessors which hitherto had armed its enemies; and in declaring it to be—a LAWFUL RELIGION.

This preliminary measure of mere justice none will now condemn; and yet in fact, by far the larger proportion of all the pride, profligacy, and ambition, which spread among the clergy in the fourth century, may be directly traced to the inevitable influence of this sudden and complete

change of fortune, and this start in their relative position. A long ten years of the most cruel sufferings, had almost broken the hearts of the Christian community. Multitudes had lost their property, and their place in society; many had perished; pastors and deacons were labouring in the mines; congregations were every where dispersed, the offices of religion suspended, and the sacred books destroyed; or if concealed, were become the most dangerous sort of possession. It might have seemed not unlikely that the Church would now actually fall and be trampled in the dust under the feet of her determined foes. That happy revolution, to which the doubtful fortune of arms gave effect, could not have been distinctly, and perhaps not at all anticipated. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of his people," they must have felt like those who awake from a horrid dream to a bright reality.

The first emotions of all pious minds were no doubt of a becoming and fervent sort. Aloud they offered praise to Him who had "turned their mourning into dancing," and had given them "beauty for ashes." But other feelings would ere long claim their turn, and especially so with the many whose piety was of a slight, or of a fanatical kind. In all private circles, from side to side of the empire, in every city and town, there would spring up the exulting and half-vindictive sentiment, natural to the wronged,

when the tables are turned upon their oppressors. The bounds of modesty and meekness would not always be observed in the triumphant joy of the now emancipated sect. In fact, we catch distinctly enough, in the extravagant harangues pronounced at the tombs of the martyrs, the couched resentment of the Church toward her fallen adversary: the feeling—and how natural a feeling is it, and how difficult to repress, which heaves the bosom in the recollection of cruel injuries, continues long to mingle itself intimately with all the sentiments of religious sufferers; and is even transmitted from age to age. Not a few of the pernicious observances of later times sprung immediately from feelings of this semi-vindictive sort.

Then again, the mere toleration of Christianity, and the favour and countenance it of course enjoyed at court, apart from any of those measures by which its political establishment was effected, instantly acted, like a sudden breaking forth of a sultry sun in a humid day, upon all ambitious and secular spirits. What were the ideas that crowded into the minds of metropolitans and bishops, nay, of the worldly clergy of every grade, who already had made great progress in effecting their schemes of aggrandizement? Such, or at least all whose position favoured their desires, turned their faces toward the quarter of sunshine; and at the earliest opportunity brought themselves individually under

the imperial eye. The most rigid and mortified of our modern sects might perhaps, in parallel circumstances, be seen to furnish not a few clerical persons, equally ready to enjoy the genial temperature of a palace, and to deck themselves in the unwonted finery of a court.

It could not be otherwise than that the now Christian emperor should surround himself with Christian bishops, and put himself, in religious matters, under the tutelage and direction of those whom he might judge qualified to inform him in what related to the Church—its doctrine and its government. Without any positive establishment of Christianity, and while nothing was done which, in the nature of things, could be avoided—if the Gospel was to take the place of the ancient idolatries, it would yet inevitably happen, that very powerful excitements should be put in activity, to stir whatever elements of ambition might lurk in the bosom of the Christian community, and especially of its clergy. To receive these excitements well, and to use them moderately, the Church was not, in its actual state, prepared to do; and the sober commonplace feeling that belongs to persons of high ecclesiastical rank, within an old establishment, who, in mixing with statesmen and princes, are conscious of no elation, could not generally attach to the Christian bishops and clergy who flocked around the throne, and thronged the imperial court of Constantine.

Instead then of repeating the vague and illusive allegation, that the POLITICAL ESTABLISHMENT of Christianity spoiled the spirituality of the Church, and rendered it ambitious, proud, and secular, let us, with a more exact regard to facts, be content to say, that, so far as ambition, pride, and secularity, really appear to have advanced in the Church of the fourth century, as compared with the Church of the third, this unhappy deterioration resulted from the sudden change of its condition, and from those new circumstances of ease, security, and favour, which unavoidably attended the revolution of opinion at the imperial court.

If nothing had been attempted by Constantine in church affairs, beyond what the most rigid modern advocates of the non-establishment principle might approve, or in other words, if he had simply tolerated, and personally favoured Christianity, there is no room to think that the damage to the simplicity and purity of the Church would have been much less than actually it was. The mitred chiefs of Constantinople, Antioch, Alexandria, and Rome, would not, any the more, have paused on the course upon which already they had gone so far. The clerical body, generally, would not have receded to the point of apostolic humility and disinterestedness. The church chest would not have been shut against the further liberality of the people. No profitable superstition would have been exploded,

no mummery laid aside. The ghostly temple of tyranny, to which the Gregories, the Urbans, and the Innocents of after times put their master hands, would yet have gone on, slowly and securely rising to the heavens, upon the broad foundations laid in tears and blood by the martyr-bishops of the pristine ages.

The first of Constantine's measures, in regard to the Church, was, as we see, one of mere justice; and so was the second; nor can either be made to bear the blame of those ill consequences which, in the actual state of the Christian community, were their natural results. At the time of the issuing of the terrible edict of Nicomedia, the Churches, in all the more opulent parts of the Roman empire, were in possession of great wealth—the fruits of the voluntary principle, and which consisted, not merely in money, plate, jewels, spices, and costly vestments, but in houses and lands. The revenues of this wealth, together with the copious and perpetual stream of offerings, laid weekly upon the altar, and which consisted, as well of money, as of provisions of every kind, enabled the bishops and metropolitans not only to support large establishments, but to retain around them, one might say, swarms of ecclesiastics, of every grade; and moreover to make distributions among the poor to an extent that, no doubt, had great influence in swelling the numbers of

the Church, and that formed a silent, but efficacious counterpoise to the occasional dangers and sufferings incident to a Christian profession.

Unlike as were these religious corporations, in most respects, to any thing heretofore seen in the Roman world, their property would, in the eye of the law, be at once regarded as analogous to the possessions and revenues of the pagan hierarchies and temples. Nor could a question arise, on the point of abstract justice, concerning the right of the holders or trustees of this wealth. The amount of it might indeed be highly prejudicial to the religious well-being of the Church; the motives of those who received, and the conduct of those who bestowed it, might be liable to the most serious exceptions; and no doubt, in some instances, the worst sort of influence had been exerted to obtain that, in the granting of which creditors, orphans, or relatives, were grievously wronged. But with considerations of this sort the government had nothing to do. Law did not apply to abuses of this order; nor could it, on any principle, be required of the emperor that he should, in relation to funds already accumulated, inquire into the particular sources whence they had flowed; or ask whether they had most benefited or injured the community.

It was, we say, a measure of mere justice to authenticate the titles and possessions of religious corporations; that is to say, of the Christian

Churches. Nor was it much more than just to insist upon the restitution of houses and lands which, during the late years of cruel persecution, had been wrenched from the hands of the bishops by their rapacious pagan fellow-citizens. This measure, in itself equitable, was moreover recommended to the approval of all, by the liberality of the emperor, who met the difficulty that arose in instances where such properties had passed into other hands, by fair purchase; and where the spoliator could not be found, or be made to refund.

On grounds of general equity and the usage of civilized nations, this main act of Constantine's religious administration cannot be condemned; nor are the principles or practices of any existing religious parties such as may entitle them to blame it. And yet, this same measure of justice did, in its actual effect upon the Christian commonwealth, by suddenly restoring to the Churches large possessions, by securing to them, in the fullest manner, what they had preserved, and by opening and fencing, for the clergy, the broad road of cupidity and spiritual fraud, produce very ill consequences, and facilitate the advance of every superstition and every solemn mockery.

The pure voluntary principle, as applied to the maintenance of the clergy, had, at the close of the third century, reached a point at which, as well for the good of the community, as for the preservation and honour of the Church, it

needed some effectual check. Such a check, drawn from motives of good sense or piety, was not available; and nothing could have taken hold of it but a vigorous interference on the part of the State; or in other words, the bringing to bear upon the abused and superstitious prodigality of the people, the Church-and-State Principle; not indeed by peremptory prohibitions (except in the matter of bequests) but by substituting a definite and well-regulated, for an indefinite and grossly-deranged system.

There is not a despotic machination, there is not an encroachment upon the natural or religious rights of mankind, there is not a perversion of doctrine, or a superstition, or a farsical usage of a later and darker age, which may not, directly or indirectly, be traced to the licence and encouragement given to the sacerdotal body to work upon the religious prodigality of the people —as well the dying as the living. It may indeed be imagined that the Church, in the time of Constantine, had sunk into a condition past remedy, or past any remedy which the State had the power to apply; yet this is not certain; and something remedial might have been attempted: but then that something must have consisted in bringing forward the ESTABLISHMENT PRINCIPLE in a way not then thought of, and which we may well suppose the clear-sighted chiefs of the then voluntary Church would by no means have submitted to. Bishops, and their clergy, understood

their interests far too well to have accepted even a munificent definite maintenance, in lieu of the free offerings of their flocks, and on the condition of declining those gratuities.

We are perpetually hearing from certain quarters, of the first political establishment of Christianity as the fatal blow which brought the true Church to the ground, and laid her celestial honours in the dust. A mistake indeed! Beside that Christianity was then already deeply stained with earthly impurities, it may, on the most substantial grounds be affirmed, that it was the want of a well-devised church-and-state system —the want of an Establishment, which made the revolution at court in favour of Christianity extensively and lastingly injurious to the Christian commonwealth. Adhering still to the line of probability, we may easily imagine a system which would have given a new turn to the fortunes of the Church (if the phrase may be allowed) would have arrested the papal usurpation, would have broken up the concentration of spiritual powers, would have starved the monastery (a discipline which the professors of extreme abstemiousness ought to have meekly received) would have destroyed the marketable quality of superstition, and, in a word, would have reduced church corruption and ambition within some limits of modesty and reason.

The imperial catechumen might indeed be permitted to summon œcumenic councils; and

might be allowed, when they were convened, to occupy a humble stool on the floor of the hall, in the midst of the mitred fathers; and he might find leave too to utter his opinions on points of theology: but it may well be doubted if he was at any time so firmly seated in the chair of ecclesiastical supremacy—although by his adulators styled 'chief bishop of the Church,' as would have enabled him to give effect to reasonable and necessary restrictive financial measures. But let it be supposed that so much power was actually at his command, what then were those measures which sound policy and a just regard to the interests as well of the Church as of the empire demanded?

In the first place, a provision of the most peremptory sort was needed, not less in regard to the ultimate welfare of the clergy, than for the sake of the community at large, against the corrupt influence exerted by the former over feeble, and guilty, and alarmed consciences, in obtaining bequests to the Church. On high theoretic grounds, indeed, and if it be held always an outrage for the magistrate to come in between the souls of men and the priest, any statute aimed against alienations in mortmain must be condemned. A man, whether ill informed in theology or not, is actually of opinion that his soul will fare the better in the next world in consequence of his robbing his children, and bequeathing his estate to the Church; is it not

then, it may be asked, a grievous infringement of religious liberty to deny him the opportunity of doing so? The wisest communities in modern times have thought otherwise; nor have they scrupled to interdict, at least the worst excesses of this pernicious superstition. If some such prohibition could have been effected (and we may well doubt its practicability) nothing, probably, would have had a more beneficial and extensive influence in staying the advance of religious abuses. Simply to have declared null and void every bequest, whether made in the article of death, or previously, in favour of religious corporations, would have given a new aspect to church history.

Then again a reasonable extension of the very same legislative principle should have been made to touch the monastic system in a capital article of its polity. Had those establishments been forcibly brought to stand upon the ground of the motives professed by their inmates, the entire system of farsical poverty would instantly and permanently have been reduced to its natural dimensions; nor could the folly have gone on, as in fact it did, to swallow up the wealth of Christendom. The papacy, deprived of its monkish champions, could never have reared its despotism to the skies. Now, be it remembered, that the fundamental principle of the monastic life—the principle stiffly insisted upon, and boasted of by its earliest pro-

moters, was that of a death to the world, to its possessions, its relationship, its hopes, its pleasures, and its duties. In the eye of others, and by his own avowal, the monk stepped into his grave when he entered his cloister: the law then should have taken him at his word; and should have put his lofty professions to the reasonable test of requiring him to bequeath his goods to his relatives. The statute of mortmain (had such a statute been in operation) should have attached those who announced themselves to be civilly and socially defunct; and instead of their being allowed to throw their fortune, whatever it might be, into the chest of the religious house, which was to be their sepulchre, they should have been compelled to divide it among the living. A measure of this sort, though at variance with the doctrine of religious liberty, as interpreted by some, might have saved Europe a thousand years of superstition.

It might seem too bold an assertion to say, that the master-spring of the religious system of the fourth century was, the command which the clergy had then got of the sources of wealth; or, in other words, the play they had contrived to give to the voluntary principle. No revision of theological dogmas, no new canons of discipline, no ecclesiastical sumptuary laws, would probably have done so much toward bringing back the purity and disinterestedness of Christian practice and principle, as might the simple establishment

of an efficient financial system, such as should have superseded, or gradually have turned off, the unbounded profusion of the people toward their clergy, and have introduced a definite and moderate, yet a sufficient public provision for their maintenance. From the days of Irenæus, the clergy had been making frequent references to the Levitical institution. They might then fairly have been required to accept for themselves an analogous system. The then existing property of the Church being secured to it, would have afforded a revenue fully adequate to the support of a proper episcopal splendour, and to the defraying of incidental charges. Beyond this, an impost, equitably assessed upon real property, might, without being felt as oppressive, have yielded a reasonable competency to so many of the ministers of religion as were actually employed in useful services: and then a vast benefit would have been done to the Church, and to the community, by turning adrift the hundreds of surpliced idlers that swelled the episcopal pageant in all the great cities.

Those who please may insist upon abstract doctrines. Meanwhile, looking at simple facts, in a common, and not a theoretic light, we venture to affirm it as probable, that, if Constantine's Christian Establishment had indeed been such, in the modern sense of the term, and had included a just and uniform financial system, displacing the abused voluntary principle,

and leaving the clergy nothing to hope for, beyond a reasonable competency, and nothing to think of, but their proper duties; if this could have been done, civilization and Christianity might both have been saved.

The church economy, modelled by Constantine, and his immediate successors, in the next place, included certain arrangements, distributions, and concentrations of the existing ecclesiastical supremacies, such as seemed necessary, or at least desirable, for bringing the newly associated and powerful religious body into analogy with the civil polity of the empire. Some authorities, of ancient date, were confirmed; some transferred; some were extended, and others made subordinate, until the one vast machine—the spiritual, fitted into the movements of the other—the secular.

These new arrangements, whatever they might involve in their details, did by no means originate either the principle or the practices of an extensive church polity, and of a broad based hierarchy. They merely induced a new and more regular form upon that great economy of provincial government, and of œcumenic relationship, which had already spread itself over the Roman world. The only *novelty of principle*, on this occasion, was this, that such arrangements should be effected by the CIVIL AUTHORITY. Whoever is so minded may call in

question the abstract lawfulness of this interference of the magistrate. But here again, as in the preceding instance, while we waive theoretic and interminable arguments, we are content, on plain and practical grounds, to assume the probability that this new modelling of the external Church, and the bringing it into correspondence with the civil mechanism of the empire, was for the better, rather than the worse; and that its tendency was to check, more than to promote, the excesses of clerical ambition.

Nor can we stop at this point; but must candidly profess to think, that the error of the imperial regenerator and rector of the Church, if any, was, not his assuming to effect a more regular polity than that which the accidents of time had brought about; but that it was, on the contrary, his not carrying these arrangements considerably further than he did; and so reducing the œcumenic hierarchy to a counterpoise, and a harmony, such as should have precluded the then fast advancing usurpations of the bishop of Rome. Whether Constantine's power was really adequate to any such reform is doubtful, probably it was not; for already the opinion that favoured the pretensions of St. Peter's successor had gained great strength, and was widely diffused.

It was not, we say, *less* of the establishment-principle, but *more* of it, that was needed when first the Church came under the wing of the

State. Whether the superstition that sustained the throne of the Romish hierarch could then have been sifted and dispelled, is not certain; but there is little room to doubt that an easy appeal to natural motives in the minds of the Patriarchs of Antioch, Alexandria, and Constantinople, and the bishops of northern Africa, would have enabled the emperor to place the several centres of church government on such a level, and to bring their correspondence under such regulations, as must have barred the ambitious course of the papacy.

At the moment of Constantine's conversion, the relative importance of the eastern, western, and African Churches, was such as well admitted of a redressing and permanent adjustment of their respective strength: and if human sagacity could have foreseen the consequences that were to flow from the withdrawment of the court, and of the imperial vigilance from Italy, and the leaving there a house, empty, swept and garnished, to be occupied by the demon of ghostly despotism—the most vigorous measures would have been adopted for keeping the Romish prelate in due subordination. No such precautions were used; and Rome a second time made herself mistress of Europe.

The modification and better adjustment of the ecclesiastical polity of the empire was not effected by Constantine without some due regard

to the distinction between the external and the internal concerns of the Church. "We ourselves," says his biographer and friend, "heard the emperor use such expressions as these, one day, when entertaining an episcopal party at the royal table; 'To you indeed is committed by God the oversight of whatever belongs to the interior of the Church; and to me, what relates to its external interests:—by God's appointment, I am bishop of these affairs.'" Constantine was not a Tudor or a Stuart; and if the perversity of some with whom he had to deal, had not gradually moved him from his position, there is reason to think he would have restrained his interference in religious matters within very reasonable bounds.

Even apart from the incidental difficulties that arose in the course of his administration, it was not likely, in that age, that the due line, which separates theological and purely spiritual affairs from the secular or political interests of the Church, should have been well understood; or if understood, consistently regarded: in fact, it very soon came to be entirely overlooked; and while bishops were allowed still to exercise jurisdiction of a civil sort, which, now that the State had become Christian, should have been altogether removed from their hands, the emperor, on his part, was importuned by the bishops to arbitrate in religious controversies, and in questions of discipline. In this article of the new

system, therefore, although the rule avowed by Constantine might be valid, the practice which gained ground is certainly not to be imitated.

We say the rule was good; and if expressed more at large, it amounts to this—That, while religion, in its primary and more momentous import, regards the condition of souls, individually, in their relation to God, and to the future life, it is also, though in a secondary, yet not an unimportant sense, an interest of the present life, and a main element of the social well-being of mankind. In its first sense, religion comes under the control and direction of the ministers of religion—the clergy; and any intrusion of the magistrate, as such, within this sacred circle, or any endeavour to bring the sentiments proper to it under the constraint of law, is a usurpation that ought to be resisted, even to death. But in its second sense, or as a fulcrum of order, and a cement of public peace, and as a rule of manners, and a sanction of civil virtue, religion not only *may*, but *must* be cared for, and be upheld, and be regulated by the State. How much soever the magistrate, in any instance, may desire to relieve his hands of this burden, he finds he cannot do so without an abandonment of his duty. What is not sustained, will decay; what is not kept in order, will fall into confusion.

On points of this sort, men of the closet—those who are as fond of theory, as they are

inexperienced in the affairs of real life, and who hold in contempt any dictates of prudence which they do not know how to connect with abstract principles, will never grant us their acquiescence. Meanwhile, if entrusted, directly or indirectly, with the serious interests of a community, we must advance, with or without a theory, on the safe ground of common sense. The morals of a nation are to be guarded; sentiments of awe toward the Divine Majesty are to be cherished; the instruction (and, to be efficacious, it must be a religious instruction) of the people, far from being abandoned to the efforts of precarious zeal, must be secured on a broad foundation; and more than this, those extensive interests of the Church, and those modifications and adaptations, made necessary by the revolutions of time, which no individuals, privately, are in a position to superintend, and which, moreover, the Church itself is often tardy in attending to, demand a vigilant regard; and must, at intervals, receive a vigorous impulse from the magistrate or the legislature.

Certain modern refinements of opinion, which would restrain a prince, or a legislature, from taking thought of the most important of all the earthly interests of a people (we say *earthly*, for we here exclude what is strictly spiritual) never, we may be sure, occurred to the mind of Constantine; and we find him, without scruple, legislating and issuing edicts in conformity with

those higher and purer principles of morality which he had learned from the Gospel. The expediency, or even the justice of certain of his measures may be questioned, or may be denied; and especially we must condemn his intrusions, though they were not frequent, upon purely theological ground. We must also, and without a doubt, reprobate those few acts—they were but few, in which, at the instigation of the clergy, he used severities against schismatics. But it is an error to suppose, as some appear to do, that Constantine's personal temper and conduct, toward the Church, were dogmatical and cruel; or that the leading principle of his polity was intolerant.

A careful consideration of the circumstances of the times, and a knowledge of facts, are requisite, before a sweeping censure should be passed upon the course pursued by the first Christian emperors toward their pagan subjects. This course was indeed far from being always consistent with the principle whence professedly it sprung; nor was the principle itself altogether such as our modern notions of religious liberty will approve. The principle avowed was, that the worship of false gods, and all customs therewith connected, were to be, by all means—not excluding the most extreme, suppressed, as immoral and impious. But while severities were resorted to in some

instances, a connivance was admitted in others, which brought into suspicion the imperial sincerity, and operated to protract the adherence of the upper classes to the ancient idolatries.

Polytheism has never been otherwise than grossly impure, and horribly cruel in its practices. Both these characteristics belonged to it in a high degree, such as it had come down to the age of the Christian emperors. The Egyptian rites, perpetrated constantly, and in open day, on the banks of the Nile, were insufferably obscene: so, though in a less offensive degree, were many of the usages of the Grecian and Roman worship. Horrid and sanguinary rites prevailed among the less civilized and outskirt nations of the empire; and indeed, without looking so far, the bloody shows of the amphitheatre, although not strictly a part of the old religion, had become firmly connected with it, and had come under its patronage, and their enormity was boundless and shameless. These various abominations could not consist with the public profession, or with the maintenance and spread of Christianity. Christianity might indeed endure them while she was herself depressed and bleeding; but she could no longer bear the offence, when calmly seated at the right hand of the secular power.

To talk of the rights of conscience, in relation to cruelties and obscenities—called religious, is a ridiculous affectation. Those who choose so

to amuse themselves, may deny the right of the magistrate to interfere in any case with the worship and belief of a people; but assuredly a sound-minded prince will not hesitate a moment, when once he finds himself able to prohibit pious murders, and pious prostitutions; or to suppress any system of oppression and knavery, which may take the mask of devotion. Thus felt Constantine, and his successors; and they actually effected the removal and extinction, throughout the empire, of many of the worst practices of heathenism:—the reform was great and important.

But it would be unfair to expect that the distinction between those religious practices which are incompatible with the maintenance of public morals, or with the security of life, and what is strictly matter of opinion and religious sentiment, should, in that age, have been understood and respected, either by emperors or by their clerical advisers. In truth, it is found, even now, an affair of considerable practical difficulty to draw the line safely when we have to do with the usages of a corrupt superstition. If the administration of our Indian possessions presents many perplexing instances of the collision of theoretic principles with the maxims of government, it is no wonder that the first Christian princes often erred, as well in principle as in their measures, when called upon to deal —inexperienced as they were, with the abomi-

tiations of polytheism. To have given no check to the sanguinary rites practised under their eye, and to have connived at the pollutions of the Phœnician and Egyptian temples (not to mention others little less atrocious) would infallibly have brought their sincerity into question, in the view, as well of their pagan, as of their Christian subjects; and must have rendered nugatory all their endeavours for the furtherance of the Gospel.

And yet, in taking the only course which they could think open to them—namely, that of authoritatively proscribing the grosser and the more cruel usages of Paganism, and in actually employing the public force for the extermination of these evils, the emperors advanced upon ground, and brought the Church with them upon ground, where nothing could happen but that both should learn the bad lessons of religious intolerance. The sword, drawn against polytheism, would, in the next moment, be turned upon heretics and schismatics. Considering the spirit and notions of the age, we ought to wonder rather that this was done so seldom, than that it was done at all. In truth Constantine exhibited an extreme reluctance to the use of compulsory measures, and ordinarily stopped short in breaking up the conventicles of those who separated themselves from the Church. Nevertheless the fatal precedent of CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION was formally given, and

sanctioned; and the Church, through a long course of ages, went on to wade, without remorse, in a path sodden with Christian tears and Christian blood. We should commiserate, as much as condemn, those whose unfortunate position, in a manner, compelled them to take steps upon a slippery descent, where the human foot could hardly secure a standing.

One other article of Constantine's ecclesiastical polity (already adverted to in passing) remains to be more distinctly spoken of; and here again, what we have to blame, is not the carrying the church-and-state system, and the establishment principle, too far; but the not carrying them far enough. The Church, or we should now say, the episcopal chiefs, had not only accumulated great wealth, but had drawn to themselves very extensive judicial powers, stretched, by various pretexts, from a narrow circle, until questions and controversies of almost every sort were brought within their sphere. The bishops' daily employments, in the larger sees, were more secular than spiritual; and he was seen oftener, and listened to more eagerly, on the bench, dividing inheritances, than in the pulpit, teaching piety.

This enormous evil—whence sprung the worst usurpations, and which furnished occasions to clerical rapacity, and was the principal means of throwing into the hands of the Church a

power that enabled her, in the end, to vanquish and trample upon the civil authority—this great mischief should doubtless have been altogether removed. The original plea on which, by the apostolic sanction, secular differences among the faithful were to be referred to an arbitration within the Church, namely, the shame to the Gospel implied in exposing the discords of Christians before the unbelieving world, was nullified when the bishop's hall had become as public a place as the courts of civil law; and when the principles of Christian equity were respected in the one judicature as much as in the other; and when, moreover, the custom of appeal to ecclesiastical authority had reached an extent absolutely incompatible with the discharge of the spiritual functions of the bishops.

With the highest advantage to all parties, this ill practice might have been brought to a close. There could be no consistency, and little validity, in the proceedings of civil courts, while such an intermingling of jurisdictions continued: it was at once a rottenness in the State, and an ulcer in the bosom of the Church. But how apply the remedy? Notwithstanding the adulation addressed to the emperors by tonsured and mitred sycophants, there is little reason to think they ever possessed power enough over their ambiguous spiritual consort to effect a reform of this kind. The Church, demure in mien, and

abject in tongue, knew very well what was substantial in the prerogatives she had acquired during her days of depression; nor was she at all likely to surrender, in the summer time of favour and prosperity, what she had won in the winter of her sorrow.

Even the people, perhaps, might have come forward to sustain their clergy in resisting the abolition of the episcopal jurisdiction. A propensity to resort to vague, rather than to well-defined means of securing doubtful interests, belongs to human nature, and especially among the uninformed classes. There were hopes and chances, attaching to the bishops' decision, which would not seem compensated by the stern and well-regulated justice of civil courts. Be this as it may, the dangerous and corrupting influence, over common interests, over persons, and property, long before obtained by the ministers of Christianity, instead of being superseded, was confirmed by the emperors. Here then we find one of the chief engines of spiritual despotism—an engine constructed and brought into play during the pristine era of the Church, left in operation, because the Church had already become too strong for the State. If the civil authority had been able to effect an Establishment, in the modern sense of the term, and with a firm hand had put the Church in her place, and had assumed to itself its proper functions and prerogatives, the former would have found

her path of encroachment barred:—she must henceforth have minded her duties.

Ill was this fatal dereliction of its rights and functions, on the part of the civil power, compensated by the prerogative which the emperors reserved to themselves of convening œcumenic councils, or by the right of investiture. The one was a power, the exercise of which might be of doubtful expediency, and of small practical value; the latter was a usurpation, not to be justified on abstract principles, and productive, in most instances, of fruitless and perilous contentions between princes and prelates. This same want of a clear and peremptory demarcation between the spiritual and the temporal elements of power, and this mutual intrusion of the two authorities upon each other's duties, was the leading fault of those arrangements that followed the public recognition of Christianity. Had such a partition been effected by Constantine, the result must have been the cashiering the clergy of extensive powers and opportunities of aggrandizement, which they had secured to themselves under the voluntary system, and by the means of it.

But the auspicious season for bringing about a well-defined national establishment, and for hemming in spiritual ambition, was lost (that is to say, *lost*, if Constantine actually had the power to curb the Church, as well as to favour it). The sinews of hierarchical tyranny were

left to it; and while it gained flesh and blood and beauty—corpulence and complexion, from the nutriment of state patronage, it did not, in any degree, lose its internal vigour, or become less enterprising, or less bold and assiduous, with its increase of bulk and marrow. At the era of Constantine's conversion, Esther bowed and fainted in the presence of Ahasuerus; but Ahasuerus forgot his discretion as a prince; and though he kept his throne, and spoke as lord and sovereign, he allowed the fair suppliant, in the end, to make her own terms, and to secure her future ascendency.

The several articles of Constantine's religious polity, to which we have adverted, are chiefly of an exterior and visible sort; and in these it is manifest that, whatever might be the submissive style of ecclesiastical leaders, and how magisterial soever might be the tones of this imperial Rector of the Church, every substantial advantage was left in her hands, and the civil authority, far from having brought the spiritual power into subserviency to itself, or even into a position of permanent equipoise, in the manner which we think of as proper to a national establishment, confirmed and secured to it the encroachments it had already made. All that had got wrong in the working of the voluntary machine during the preceding two centuries, was set forward with a new impetus, instead of being redressed by

vigorous enactments;—enactments such as would have amounted to what we intend and desire in an Established Church.

The progress of Church Power, in regard to its external conditions, and especially as concentrating around the see of Rome, has been fully exhibited by several eminent modern writers, and is a subject familiar to English ears. To go over this ground anew, would be here superfluous; and besides, in the present volume, we keep our eye rather upon the substance and occult principle of Spiritual Despotism, than upon what may be called its political steps, or those circumstances and revolutions of which the historian takes account.

We have then yet to make inquiry concerning the not-obtruded spirit and feeling of the Church (that is to say, of its chiefs) in the era now under review, and while the open subjugation of the secular authority was only in preparation: during this ambiguous period, she visibly bowed before the imperial throne, but really was mistress of affairs, and seems to have conceived the idea of grasping every sort of authority.

One cannot peruse the orations and epistles of the time without perceiving that the clergy distinctly felt their strength, that strength which they drew from their intimate influence with a large class of the people. No

longer in dread of the open hostility which the principles of the Gospel forbade them to oppose, they threw themselves upon the vast and undefined means of their power, and spoke in a tone such as the court could not fail to understand. The force of Christianity over the popular mind (when actually affected by it) is indeed incalculable; and this force had been rather enhanced than diminished by the spread of superstition. Then the usage of preaching, unknown to paganism, had brought the mass of society under an influence analogous to that which the orators of ancient Greece and Rome had exercised. This influence, moreover, was, if we might use such a simile, pulverized, and applied in the most pungent and caustic form to the entire sensitive surface of the Christian community, by the practices of catechetical instruction, and of private confession, and by that individual cure of souls to which the clergy assiduously addicted themselves.

The dark cloud that passed over the Church during the short inimical reign of Julian, served to bring to view the real temper of the leading men of the times.—So, amid the dazzling beams of a noon-day sun, we do not distinguish the fires that have been kept alive in a camp covering a distant plain; but if the heavens become suddenly overcast with stormy volumes of vapour, we then instantly perceive the smouldering heaps, here and there, which glow and

brighten, and which the huffing gusts of the coming tempest soon fan into a flame.

The orations of Gregory Nazianzen, and two of the epistles of Basil, not to look further, afford indications enough of the feeling, or of the preparation of feeling, working in episcopal bosoms, when the christian body found itself again threatened with hostility. A very great, and we may say, a very improbable revolution in principles and maxims must have taken place before Christians could have thought of opposing force to force; and, happily, the fall of their adversary very early broke up any meditations (if actually revolved) of an unbecoming sort. But this unexpected check served to exhibit a consciousness of power in the Church, and deepened it too. Accustomed as we are, in modern times, and notwithstanding the spirit of freedom that is abroad, to respect the courtesies due to royalty defunct, our ears are startled by the harsh and rancorous invectives heaped upon the name of the apostate, by the Churchmen of the day. It might have been supposed that, though the family of Constantine had now no surviving avenger, the wearers of the purple would have resented these insults to the dead, as touching their own dignity.

The changing circumstances of the Arian controversy, in its course through the fourth century, elicited many portentous expressions of church feeling, we do not say of church arro-

gance, in relation to the imperial authority. Hilary of Poictiers, Martin of Tours, and Ambrose of Milan, as appears from their writings, or from their reported speeches and conduct, knew themselves to stand in a position such as allowed them to measure forces with the State.

But the spiritual energy of the spiritual despotism of this period, was shewn when at length occasions arose calling for the application of the wonted discipline of the Church to imperial delinquents. Now, when these instances meet us, we should by no means hastily blame the bold impartiality of the bishops who dared to reprove sin upon the throne; on the contrary, their intrepidity, and especially if we could think it simple minded, claims admiration. Yet it is highly improbable that these punitive measures would either have been attempted on the one side, or submitted to on the other, unless church rulers had well understood the breadth and firmness of the ground they then occupied, and unless princes had understood it too.

The well known conduct of Ambrose toward Theodosius, which indeed fell little short of that of the popes of the twelfth century toward the princes of their time, puts beyond reasonable doubt the assertion that, though the civil and the ecclesiastical authorities were then in a relative position, such as apparently left the supremacy with the former, public opinion had reached a point which allowed the latter to say and do

almost whatever its own discretion might admit. It is well, in any age, when the high principles of christian morality are so regarded, and have such force, that the mightiest monarchs feel themselves compelled to yield obedience to church censures. But this can happen only under two conditions; that is to say, either when genuine Christian virtue so governs the sentiments of the mass of mankind, as that discipline takes effect, as it were, spontaneously; or else, when clerical arrogance has reached a height that enables it to indulge in the gratification of smiting a crowned and anointed head. Now we cannot contemplate the moral condition of the Roman world in the age of Ambrose, and believe that Theodosius bowed to the majesty of public virtue. What he actually bowed to was, the terrors and the pride of spiritual despotism.

This single instance, looked at by itself, or as a scene in a drama, compels our admiration, and we can do nothing but applaud the holy intrepidity of the minister of heaven. Had the same courage always, as in this case, been exerted on the side of humanity, no reputation would have stood higher than that of Ambrose. That he himself sincerely regarded those great principles of religion and virtue, to which he compelled his sovereign to do homage, cannot fairly be doubted. But there were other principles, and there was another object, inseparably

connected in his mind with purer motives, and which swayed his conduct with at least an equal force. These principles involved the transcendency of church power; and this fond object was the very same, afterwards so boldly pursued, and at length achieved, by the papal court, namely, the absolute subjugation of the secular to the spiritual power. It is quite impossible to doubt the identity of purpose and of principle, when the language used by the chiefs of the hierarchy is traced backward, shall we say, from the Decretals of Gregory IX. and thence to the epistles of Innocent III. and thence to those of Gregory VII.; and again to the writings of Gregory the Great, and of St. Leo, and of Ambrose? Nay, our retrogressive inquiry should not stop there; for the very same style and terms meet us, scarcely disguised, in the pages of Cyprian.

During this long course of time, though at a first glance we may think we see the Church, not merely patronized and favoured, but *governed* by the State, a very little attention to facts, and to the half-uttered sentiments of ecclesiastics, is enough to convince us that the real relative position of the two powers was the reverse of what it appeared. On the one side there was a growing consciousness of independent authority, and on the other a feeling of virtual subjection, poorly compensated by the forms of imperial rule, or by single exertions of power.

The church-and-state system (if such it can be called) from the time of Theodosius, and onward, was, in its essence, whether or not in its form, the opposite of our modern national establishments: and if we can only imagine, what in truth seems unlikely, that an entire community—its upper and its lower classes, should come as fully under the power of arbitrary religious motives, as did the mass of the christian community in the fourth and fifth centuries, a non-established bishop (or presbyter) of an English or American city, might copy the pattern of an Ambrose or an Urban, and chastise and humiliate kings and emperors. What renders the recurrence of any such acts of clerical arrogance improbable, is not the present feeble condition of ecclesiastical establishments, but the decay and dispersion of those deep feelings on which superstition founds its power.

Before we lose sight of the archbishop of Milan, it may be proper to advert to circumstances which, though they scarcely attract notice on the page of history, are yet significant as showing the tendency of church affairs. Again and again it happened, when Theodosius visited his spiritual lord, coming fresh from the oriental pomps of his Constantinopolitan court, and being surrounded by obsequious Greeks, that he had to be schooled anew in the hard lesson of the nothingness of earthly distinctions, and the subserviency of the temporal to the spiritual

authority. At home, when attending the celebration of the "sacred mysteries," courtesy assigned to the emperor an elevated place, near the altar: but not so at Milan; for Ambrose could grant no precedency to a mere layman, such as might seem to put him upon an equality with the sacerdotal order. What was the lustre of the purple when looked at in the light of consecrated candles! "My son, stand among the people, without the rail." "When," replied the childlike master of the world, "when shall I learn that an emperor is not a priest?" Theodosius in Italy had to forget the Theodosius of the eastern empire. The behaviour of Martin of Tours to Maximus is quite in accordance with that of Ambrose. The Western Church had, at a very early time after the conversion of Constantine, and the removal of the court to Byzantium, gained so far upon the secular power, as to be in fact, if not in form, on the ascendant side. The two forces, it may be said, were still in equipoise, because a nominal supremacy was accorded to the emperors; but the leading prelates of the Latin Church, from the first, breathed the soul of unborn popes.

The preparations for the papacy—that is to say, the church ascendency of Italy and of Rome, its centre, had already been carried very far, and almost every changing fortune, as well of the eastern as of the western empire, opened the path to its usurpations. So, when the

waters of a flood are rising, whether the swelling torrents are opposed and made angry by firm embankments, or ingress is given to them by the fall of barrier after barrier, still the issue is the same;—the tide rises, inch by inch; hill after hill disappears, and at length nothing but here and there some signal of ruin breaks the waves of the universal deluge.

But turning aside from the gradual advance of the PAPACY, and bestowing our attention rather upon the real springs of that spiritual despotism which the papacy inherited and employed, we find, during the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, the rules and practices of church discipline reaching a state which left almost every sort of encroachment upon the secular authority open to the discretion of ecclesiastics. The engine of this discipline was plied, or was stayed, in particular instances, in accordance with the policy of the moment, or the temper and courage of pontiffs and their agents. It was a power—now held in abeyance—now produced and moderately worked, to inspire a necessary fear; and now brought to bear with all its terrors upon some unfriended delinquent.

The assumed grounds, and the chief points of this church discipline, will claim to be briefly considered in the next Section. They were indeed all devised and produced, and more or less put in force, during that preliminary era which has now been under review;

but they will be examined to best advantage, such as we find them professed without reserve, and acted upon without scruple, from the pontificate of Gregory the Great, down to the time of the Lutheran Reformation.

In the east, the Church, at once patronized and repressed by the immediate presence of imperial power, retained, to the last, its servility, and existed only as a pomp of the court. But in the west, sacerdotal ambition took a free course; the difference of national temperament favouring those accidental circumstances of the empire which gave it room. During the later years of this era of counterpoise, it is manifest, as well in relation to the east as the west, though far more decisively with the latter, that the occult motive of concession to secular authority, on the part of the Church, was the need it still felt of the imperial arm for the suppression of heresy and schism. "Lend us your sword when we want it, and we will call you master." This was the language of patriarchs and popes, and this the reason of moderation and obedience on the one side, and of the continuance of a nominal supremacy on the other. A relative bearing not very unlike to this, and which we must hereafter more distinctly advert to, subsisted between Church and State in England from the reformation to the revolution. Except for giving effect to its sentences of banishment, confiscation, and death, the Church wanted

nothing which the State had to bestow. Already it had established its irresponsible domination over the minds of mankind — it ruled their hopes — it ruled their fears — it grasped their persons, their wealth, their souls; it claimed earth, it disposed of heaven: none could speak or breathe, on this mortal scene, without its leave; none go out of it safely, without its passport. The magistrate yet held the sword — the public force was under his control, and for this sole reason, the Church did him homage.

The era of the counterpoise of the secular and spiritual powers was not the period of a church-and-state alliance, in the modern, or in any proper sense of the phrase; but of an ambiguous and changing contest between two independent forces, never really adjusted, never in harmony; a contest marked by the slow but sure advances of the insidious party, and terminated by a prouder and more unlimited triumph than itself had imagined. The moment of the consummation of this victory we shall not attempt to fix.

SECTION VII.

THE CHURCH ASCENDANT.

It might tend, not a little, to dispel some delusive impressions, common to the protestant world, if a phrase could be found which, while characteristic of the superstitious and despotic system that, from the second and third centuries supervened, and displaced Christianity, should clearly separate it from its accidental connexion with the papacy, and the Romish hierarchical tyranny. The popes occupied, and turned to their particular advantage, this vast and refined system of error and oppression; but the system itself has deeper roots, is more recondite, more intellectual, and is more ancient than the usurpation of the bishops of Rome. Nor is this all; for the spiritual essence of popery has outlived the overthrow of the papal domination, or the proper power of Rome; and (which is a significant truth) it may survive the total dispersion and final dissolution of that hierarchy of which the pope is head and organ.

There is, then, some substantial and practical

importance in an inquiry concerning those theoretic axioms to which the Papacy gave visible and audible expression. What were the grasping principles that imparted strength and vitality to popery, and which, without supposing any thing chimerical, may start forth afresh, and rule the world again, when popery shall be found no where but on the page of history?

Instead then of occupying our present narrow space, as might easily be done, with graphic descriptions of that state of society, and of that order of character, which the despotism of Rome, while at its height, engendered; and instead of adducing striking instances of the cruelties and the abominations that attended its prevalence; and instead of attempting an historical synopsis of the steps of its advance and decline; and instead of giving the reins to our emotions of indignation and abhorrence in the view of its tyranny, perfidy, and corruption, we shall endeavour calmly, and as concisely as possible, to set forth, in its several leading articles, the theory of spiritual despotism, such as it may be gathered from the church writers of the times when it had reached its full proportions.

Some passing hints excepted, the author does not here assume the task of refuting the principles he has to exhibit. In truth, the most convincing refutation of them we have always at hand, in the horrors and the religious debauchery to which they gave support.

Let it be kept in mind, that, when speaking of church despotism, as in the plenitude of its power, we are thinking of the three or four centuries that date their commencement from the pontificate of Hildebrand; yet always remembering that those dog-days of spiritual arrogance were distinguished from the preceding era, more by the firm and digested condition of its maxims, and by the bold avowal of them, than by any real difference of principle. If the reader has been accustomed to think that the popery of St. Dunstan, St. Becket, and St. Dominic, was the popery of *those times, distinctively*, he will do well to take in hand the bulky folio that contains the Decretals of Gregory IX., where he will find the adult popery of that pontiff's era set out in all its rules and practices, even to the most minute points, and these, often sustained by, or expressed in, the very words of the great writers of the fourth and earlier centuries. If any are not convinced of it, let them give the necessary diligence to learn the certainty of this truth—that the spiritual despotism which spoke in the popes, is now sixteen hundred years old, and rather more. And, moreover, let it be understood, and maturely considered, that the Lutheran reformation was an assault, much rather upon the PAPACY, and upon its special errors and superstitions, than upon the theory and principles of the spiritual

despotism, of which the papacy was the accidental form.

A second reformation, and it must be an extensive one, remains to be attempted and achieved—by our sons, such as shall bring the Church home to its resting-place upon the foundation of the "Apostles and Prophets."

The THEORY of the spiritual despotism embodied in the Romish superstition, and fully realized during the middle ages, may conveniently be exhibited under five articles, each of which makes itself felt in every practice and principle of the Church; and each is a pillar, the removing of which would have brought the whole edifice to the ground. These articles we thus enumerate.—

I. That inasmuch as religion is of supreme importance and of infinite moment, whatever directly or indirectly promotes or obstructs the spiritual well-being of mankind, carries a consequence immensely outweighing even the most important secular interests. The very least of those duties, or claims, or functions, that are connected with God and eternity, is therefore to be held greater than the greatest of the things of earth; nay, than all these temporal and terrestrial affairs put together.

II. The spiritual well-being of mankind, or, in a word, the relations of man to God and eternity, are placed under the control of a

visible corporation—the Church, and under a rectorship—that of its head, apart from whose jurisdiction there can be no safety here or hereafter.

III. This control and rectorship is, by the express appointment of heaven, ONE; nor, in the nature of things, can it be divisible: it is moreover unchanging and perpetual.

IV. Every ordinary act and spiritual office, and every decision or decree of this one rectorial authority, is infallibly good, efficacious, and, in the estimation of Heaven, valid; and this notwithstanding the frailty, or errors, or personal improbity, or impiety, of the individual from whose lips and hands it may at any time proceed.

V. The function of this perpetual rectorial authority includes three charges; namely, the preservation of truth, the preservation of morals, and the disposal of souls in the eternal state.

It will be proper to show the practical exposition given of these articles severally, by the Romish Church; and in that exposition we shall find a sufficient refutation of them. But let the reader bear in mind, as we advance, the readiness with which the principles as here stated, while viewed in an abstract form, might recommend themselves, even to the most vigorous and upright minds, as excellent and unexceptionable. Some of the greatest and the best of men, in surrendering themselves, body and soul, to the Romish Church, have stepped back from the particular practices of that Church, and have taken

their standing, as they thought immovably, upon the theory of church power, such, in substance, as we have now to state it. The thorough sincerity and virtuous intention of many of the most zealous champions of the papacy may well be admitted. Alas, the condition of humanity! How should we commiserate, and how tenderly bear with each other, as the unconscious victims often of illusions! and how should each bring to the severest test his own conduct and convictions! The lesson of modesty and charity should indeed be gathered from the humiliating pages of church history. The pious and the upright we find; but where find those who have been altogether exempt from infatuations?

The religious theory and polity we have now to analyse could never have been imagined by minds of that inferior class which, with a consciousness of turpitude, pursues base ends by base means; on the contrary, spirits of the loftiest order, and these intensely affected by the most powerful motives which human nature can admit, and accustomed to grasp the largest ideas, were the authors of this vast scheme of government. Nevertheless, it was a scheme that could not have been brought to bear upon the social system without the constant cooperation of the cruel and the false. This indeed is the singularity of the papal superstition (we must still use the special designation, in want of one more proper and comprehensive) that it

has, in every age, brought into close alliance the noblest and the most abominable natures. In the present instance we have to think of it such as it has proceeded from the former, and intend to view it in that light in which it has fascinated their regards.

I. The sublimity that attaches to the highest truths surrounds the fundamental principle of this mighty system. Christianity has thrown open to man the portals of eternity: whatever heretofore had been thought great, and noble, or momentous, now shrinks and disappears. The relation of the human spirit to the Infinite Spirit, and its future alternative of unbounded good or ill, involve what is too vast to be placed for a moment in counterpoise with even the weightiest earthly interests. These objects, if once they command the soul, and are inwardly revolved, and become combined with the moral sentiments, carry all ordinary motives in their train: nothing, with reason, can come in to relax their energy. It was on the strength of these very motives that the first Christians "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," and that they amazed the world by their readiness to meet tortures and fiery deaths. On the strength of these same motives the Christian, individually, and in every age, if he be such in truth, "counts all things as loss," and refuses to think the sufferings of the present season, even at the worst, worthy to be set off against the future

glory. So far all is well, and especially while, in each practical application of this high and just principle, a careful regard is had to the explicit demands of present duty. The ascetic, though he rightly esteems the world as lighter than a bubble, if weighed against heaven, forgets that, although nothing else is substantial in the present life, its duties are.

We have only now to ascend a few steps higher, so as to reach a position whence the eye may command the spiritual welfare of mankind at large, or that of great communities. Our individual interests and relationship to God and eternity being dismissed, or being duly secured, and done with, we go on to apply to others the rule we have applied to ourselves. And this we may do, whether or not those for whom we undertake to care are conscious of their personal welfare in this behalf: nay, the less they are themselves alive to what so much imports them, the more urgent is the call of charity to care for them. But this sovereign regard to the eternal well-being of our fellows, involves many indirect, as well as direct, methods of procedure. Those around us, far and near, whom we reckon to be in danger of perdition, are not to be reclaimed merely by personal entreaty and instruction; but by the working of a certain instituted machinery of moral and spiritual means. Our philanthropy must take the course marked out for it, and no

other. To depart from that course, would be at once to spend our efforts in vain, and to provoke the displeasure of Him who alone can render them efficacious.

We reach then, and in a form adapted to practical application, the prime principle of the system before us.—A scheme of moral and spiritual means for the benefit of mankind, having been permanently established by the Author of Christianity, all the individual labours, and desires, and projects, in behalf of their fellow-men, of those who profess fealty to Christ, must flow in this one channel; or to change the figure, must be made to converge upon this one centre, and from that centre must again emanate. In other words, the well-being of mankind can mean nothing else but the well-being, the honour, the power, the efficacy, and the enlargement of the CHURCH. How circuitous soever may be the track our benevolence pursues, it must (unless it be worse than useless) come round to this home—the Church: not so brought home, it is idle, fruitless, presumptuous, impious.

Religion is granted to be of infinite moment. The interests of the present life—its wealth, honours, pains, pleasures, taken at the highest rate, are only of finite value; and therefore, according to the soundest rule of comparison, the smallest religious interest immensely outweighs the largest earthly interest; or indeed,

all earthly interests in mass. Sum up the weal and woe of the entire human family, on this mortal stage, and it is as nothing—lighter than vanity, when weighed against any single advantage or detriment that affects eternity. Translate this sort of arithmetic into the somewhat less abstract and more technical symbols of the Church, and then it means this—That the smallest advantage of the Church should be held of more importance—immensely so, than the highest secular good.

This potent and pregnant doctrine, demonstrably sound as it appears, may be applied to individual instances, and it may lead us, with perfect coolness and an untroubled conscience, to employ the assassin who removes, without noise, an enemy of the Church; or to consign men to dungeons or the stake. We do not indeed approve these pains and this bloodshed in itself; but we desire the honour and integrity of the Church; and the end being of infinite moment, carries all means, and makes all lawful. The only doubt that can find any room for discussion in such cases is this—whether, in the particular instance, the welfare of the Church does really demand the sanguinary deed. If it does, then the pang of a million deaths ought not to affect our decision.

Or to apply this same principle to that control over the affairs of nations which the papacy, during its high summer season, claimed

to exercise, and did exercise:—when once the Church had achieved its supremacy over the entire European community, then there could be no doubt that its wealth, its dignity, its means of influence, its permanency, and its prospects of extension, were, in the most direct manner, connected with the course of national policy, with the upholding of one regal family, the removal of another, and the subserviency of all. The Church, conceived of on this great principle, could demand nothing less than to be recognized as the mistress of the world—the disposer of crowns, and the supreme authority, as well in secular as spiritual affairs. The control of the spiritual would be of no avail, apart from the control of the secular; for the former could be secured and promoted only by means of an absolute command over the latter.

The churchmen and pontiffs of the middle ages verily believed the world and all its glories to be their own, as the vicegerents of heaven. And in teaching this lesson to haughty princes, an arrogance, proportionate to the pride and obduracy of their pupils, became them. The weapons of the spiritual warfare, when brought to bear upon the carnal weapons of earthly power, must be wielded with so much the more energy, to put the combatants on equal terms.

For installing spiritual despotism in the seat

of absolute and universal power, nothing, as it is manifest, was needed but to apply the great truth of the infinite importance of religion, to that VISIBLE AUTHORITY, or corporation, which claimed to be the organ and depositary of religion. This application was effected by the aid of the general, and almost universal opinion, that allowed the bishops of Rome to have inherited the supreme authority of St. Peter. When once this link in the chain was filled up, and fastened, the most sincere and ingenuous natures, as well as the crafty and ambitious, gave themselves up to promote the cruelties and oppressions of the Church, and felt that they were sustained in doing so by all the powers of eternity.

II. Church power rests upon the validity of the connexion assumed between its first principle and its second: this point being secured, every thing else follows as a necessary consequence. The religious welfare of mankind, supremely important as it is, has not, it is alleged, been abandoned to accidents, or left to be promoted by casual influences; nor has it even been consigned, independently of human instrumentality, to the invisible operations of the Divine Spirit. Christianity is not a mere matter of opinion, like those systems of philosophy which were taught and talked of one year, and forgotten the next. On the contrary, there is a visible and perpetual rectorial power

(wherever lodged) to which, by Divine appointment, is committed the duty of administering, of preserving, of extending, and of transmitting the faith, the offices, and the precepts of the Gospel. If the Church be, in one sense, an invisible body, and if this body be immortal, it is also, in another sense, a visible body, and a perpetual one; and moreover, if the invisible Church be under the immediate guardianship of the Lord, its Priest and King, so is the visible Church (in the absence of the Lord) placed under the control of an earthly, yet perpetual vicar. The Lord being personally removed, if his followers, like sheep without a shepherd, were left to their discretion, what could happen but that they should wander, each in his own way, and all perish on the mountains, or become a prey to the wolf? If there be then a visible institution for conserving the truth, and if there be a shepherd of the flock, and a rector of the Church, whose hand and lips may be looked to, on every occasion, for guidance and instruction, then it is manifest that the infinite importance of religion sustains and attaches to that power, to the care of which religion is committed.

These two articles involve all that is needed to serve as a broad foundation for the most absolute spiritual despotism. What is then wanted, is to bring them to bear upon some actual centre. In pursuance of this intention, it is next alleged—

III. That this rectorial power is ONE and undivided; that it is irresponsible to any earthly authority; that it is unchangeable, and shall endure while there is a Church on earth. That it must be so, might be inferred from the nature of things, inasmuch as a divided authority, or several independent authorities, put in trust with one and the same interest, are superfluous so long as they perfectly agree, and destructive of each other's claims, if they fall into discord. Church authority, standing as the visible and audible organ of the invisible Lord, is at once made nugatory if it expresses itself ambiguously, or inconsistently and variously. Truth is one; the will of Heaven is one;—the oracle of both therefore must be one.

But apart from the abstract statement of this third principle of spiritual power, we turn to the tenor of the Gospel, and the express enactments of Christ; and on this ground, it must be admitted that every sort of proof, direct and indirect, favours the doctrine of the unity of the Church, and of its visible integrity, as a manifestation, in the eye of the world, of heavenly truth and virtue. The passages that bear on this point need not be here adduced; but we find them, from the very first, forcibly urged and perpetually repeated by the defenders of the general Church. No communion—no piety: no unity—no Church. A distracted Church must have forgotten its glory, and broken its

duty, and lost connexion with its Head;—in a word, it is no longer what it calls itself.

If then there be one Church, and one centre and source of authority, where is it found, and who is it that rightfully holds the staff of power? This has been the trying point in every age with the Papacy; and although it has made out a case which may fairly satisfy all who were willing to be satisfied; it has never been able to convict its opponents. The evidence is defective precisely in that part of the chain of proof where the firmest coherence is needed. If the supreme and transmissible authority of St. Peter, as first Bishop of Rome, and rock of the Church, had been intended by the Lord, in the sense affirmed by the Papacy, the proof of so special and peculiar an appointment, instead of being indistinct and attenuated, and open to valid exceptions, *at its commencement*, should then have been clear and uncontroverted. On the contrary, this doctrine, though generally admitted, and stoutly affirmed in a later age, is barely perceptible, if at all, in the first century, but dimly in the second; and it comes out in the third and fourth only as the consequence of those political circumstances which made it the interest of individuals and of Churches to admit and maintain it.

Nevertheless the concurrence of many traditions, and the general tendency of opinions and of usages, was such as to leave the champions of

the Romish Church, from the time of Gregory I. and onwards, in possession of what they felt to be firm ground. The argument was strong enough for the binding of willing consciences, if not for the breaking down of an adversary: and this point being once conceded, or leapt over, then the path was open for bringing in all that remains to give to the occupier of St. Peter's chair a command over the bodies and souls of men, absolute, irresponsible, unlimited, and altogether unparalleled. Such they claimed, and in the boldest language affirmed, and actually exercised, during a long course of ages. The power thus assumed being granted, it was, in the next place, necessary to give it a specific and clear interpretation, as applicable to the several departments over which it was to be stretched. It was therefore a principle of the Romish despotism—

IV. That every act of the Church, ordinary and extraordinary, and every decision, in a word, whatever the Church did, and whatever it said, was absolutely valid, true, and efficacious, in a divine and spiritual sense; and was so, irrespectively of the merits or defects, the infirmities or the vices, of the individuals who might administer its offices, or promulgate its decrees.

We form no consistent idea of the Papacy unless we distinctly admit into our conception of it this pretension to a perpetual SUPERNATURAL EFFICACY, attending it in every step and act, and

vivifying its whole framework of offices, worship, and administrations. The very highest profession of spirituality, and of immediate Divine agency, and of continued miraculous authentication and support, is the ground which the Romish despotism assumes; nor can it defend itself a moment if this ground be abandoned. Christianity, in the hands of the papacy, is, through and through, and at every moment, a heavenly scheme, existing in the world only by the aid of miracles, and embodying omnipotence and omniscience.

The infallibility of the Pope—the real presence in the eucharist—the unvarying efficacy of the *opus operatum* of the Sacraments—the succession of miracles, and powers of healing—the efficacy of the intercession of the saints—the patronage of individuals and of communities by the saints—the power of masses for the release of souls—the priests' authority to remit sin and to bind it;—and indeed every dogma and practice of the Church, is a portion and proper consequence of the one doctrine, that the Church is a divine institution, maintained and administered, from age to age, by the very same almighty energy that gave it birth. This doctrine, indefinitely convertible as it is to all purposes of sacerdotal ambition, delivered over the bulk of mankind, without relief or reserve, and body and soul, into the hands of the ministers of religion;

and we find it, not very obscurely advanced by the Fathers of the third century, very distinctly maintained by their successors of the fourth and fifth, and in the loudest and most peremptory manner affirmed by all churchmen during the dog-days of the Romish spiritual despotism.

This doctrine is, in fact, the core of Popery: genuine Protestantism is its opposite. Not indeed that the reformers, personally, got themselves clear of its infection. Luther especially, and the founders of the English Church, while they rejected such portions of the principle as had become the most offensive, or were the most flagrantly at variance with the Scriptures, or were the least capable of extenuation on the plea of apostolic tradition, yet fondly clung to as much of it as they were not compelled to relinquish; they therefore left their ecclesiastical institutions in a state that now demands—either some further reformation; or a candid and childlike return to the bosom of the ancient Roman Catholic Church, which alone is harmonious in theory and practice.

The Church having established its claims to an unbounded control over whatever may in the remotest manner affect the religious welfare of the human race, and having made profession of its supernatural power to administer, efficaciously, the absolute government of the world, it only remained for it to apply its

principles to the several duties which, in virtue of its commission, it was called upon to discharge.

V. The Church then, through the organ of its supreme Rector, and in the exercise of its heaven-derived authority, holds itself bound to take care of—the preservation and propagation of Truth;—the preservation of Morals; and the disposal of souls in the future and unseen worlds. What is involved in these several high functions must be specified.

1st. To the Church, it is said, is entrusted the preservation and propagation of Truth. The word of Christ and his apostles, as contained in the Scriptures, or as transmitted from age to age traditionally, is acknowledged to be the ultimate standard of belief and duty in matters of religion. But this word needs interpretation, and needs it anew, as occasions arise. The multifarious heresies that have sprung up around the Church, and the endless diversity of opinions that result from allowing to every Christian the right to be his own interpreter of Scripture, and the incompetency of by far the greater number of the faithful to exercise any sound judgment on questions of theology, are, it is said, enough to demonstrate the necessity of a perpetual authoritative decision of points of religious observance and belief. All difficulties, and all diversities, and feuds, are summarily superseded, if once it is admitted

that the Church is sovereign arbitress of controversy, and keeper of the truth.

Now, in discharging her duty in this behalf, the Romish Church is consistent both in principle and practice. She professes to be always in immediate correspondence with Heaven, to enjoy the supernatural and plenary aids of the Holy Spirit, and, in consequence, to be infallible in her judgments. On the contrary, the power assumed, and the penalties inflicted, by Protestant Churches, must be deemed despotic, presumptuous, and barbarous, in the highest degree, inasmuch as these communities admit at the same time their own fallibility. Confessedly, therefore, they might, and no doubt often did, decide for error, and have inflicted pains, imprisonments, and death, upon their opponents cruelly, unwarrantably, and in despite of truth. Measures of persecution resorted to by men acknowledging their own liability to err, are indeed manifestly preposterous and horrible. Not so when the same severe means are employed by those who never err, and who know themselves, in every particular, to be expressing the pure will of God.

We say the theory and practice of the Romish Church are on this ground accordant, the one with the other. The papal authority is distinguished from all others on earth by being a supernatural authority; and therefore it may boldly

pursue its ends, and fulfil its duty, as guardian of truth, without scruple, hesitation, or any weak and wavering regard to considerations of mercy. Upon all those occasions when the frailty of the human heart might make the chastising hand of authority to tremble, recurrence is to be had to that prime principle—the supreme and infinite importance of religion: but religion cannot exist apart from the truth, which is its basis. Truth then must be preserved and defended, at whatever cost. Better, if necessary, or if no milder remedy can avail, better that some hundred thousand heretics should perish in the flames, than that heresy itself—immortal poison as it is, should be permitted to infect the souls of men at large. Better that an heretical prince should be deposed, his kingdom placed under an interdict, and wasted, year after year, by bands of faithful crusaders, than that Christendom should be exposed to a fast spreading contagion, which carries eternal death in its train.

Not only *may* the Church resort to these, or to any other extreme means for preserving the truth; but she is bound to do so: she has no choice: to profess principles of toleration, in subserviency to the lax notions of modern times, would be, on her part, to forfeit consistency, and in the most fatal and traitorous manner to abandon the high ground on which her authority is reared. Unless indeed it be with

a reserved purpose, and with a *faithful falsity*, the Church can never assent to those liberal political doctrines which have got ground of late, even in Catholic countries. If she does not now actually possess the power to enforce submission to her will, the least she can do is loudly to protest against the violence done her by her contumacious and irreligious sons. She should revoke the titles of "most faithful," "most catholic," and "most apostolic," wherever those sublime distinctions are not merited by the employment of the sword for the extermination of heresy.

The duty of using the most extreme means for the preservation of truth, or in common protestant parlance, the practice of persecution, is a necessary element of this church theory. Without it there is no longer harmony in the scheme, consistency in the professions of its supporters, safety to the institution, nor any probability of its extension.

In the happy era of its unchecked and universal domination, the Church very clearly understood what became it; and boldly put in movement the proper engines of its power. While in this mind, and while possessed of the means of effecting its purposes, the inquisitorial scheme might be regarded as a mode of mercy. Was it not an act of paternal tenderness, and a wise and kind anticipation of evils, to institute the most searching inquiries that

might lead to the instantaneous discovery of error, and to its removal at the earliest moment? What faithful physician would not, if he could, assail disease at its small commencements, and effect at once a sharp but lasting cure? The severest means are the most merciful if they are efficacious, and if the malady be mortal.

So thought the Romish Church in her best and brightest days—the times of Innocent III., and for giving the fullest effect to her measures she established the maxim—a maxim expressed in the very language of the greatest doctor of the fourth century—'That he who only doubts concerning the faith, is to be reputed an infidel.' This rule, promulgated by the Church, and urged upon all consciences, touched the inmost recesses of the soul, and left no alternative to the sincere and devout, but either to reject and exclude from their hearts, instantly, the first suggestion of scepticism, and never to ask for proof of any dogma;—or, to go over to the ranks of the reprobate, and to plunge at one leap into perdition. The same rule, acted upon by the judicial agents of the Church, allowed them, without remorse, to visit the most venial instances of aberration from the catholic doctrine, with the severest chastisements. Strictly speaking, there could be no degrees of guilt among those who disputed, where the Church had decided: there was no scale of heretical pravity.

'He who only doubts is an infidel;' and the infidel must recant, or be consigned to his doom.

But the Church was bound to propagate the faith as well as to preserve it; and in the performance of this duty she might choose her means: that is to say, she might adopt the simple methods of instruction, by the agency of missionaries; and in giving them their commission, might allow them to make what compromise they thought fit with pagan usages and superstitions; or she might take the more rapid and glorious course of open conquest by force of arms. If her warlike sons could be induced to serve her with their swords, and shed their blood for her honour and their own salvation, there could be no doubt of the lawfulness, nay, of the benevolence, of such enterprises. What philanthropy like that of conquering empires for the Church? If "he that winneth souls is wise," how wise are they who, instead of the tedious process of individual conversion by teaching and preaching, effect the salvation of millions in mass, by a few days of bloody combat. In her extermination of heretics, in her inquisitorial procedures, in her crusades against infidels, the Church still preserved consistency with her professions and her principles. If her theory be sound, her practice has been good and wise.

2dly. The Church was the guardian of the

morals of the community; and after taking care that her children should be nurtured with truth, it was her next duty to see that they brought forth the fruits of faith; or if not, to inflict needful chastisements. Now, as the entire mass of the people in Christian countries, those only excepted who impiously broke away from the fold, were claimed as members of the Church, and liable therefore to its censures, and as, moreover, every violation of law was a SIN, every such act of every individual within the pale of the Church, came properly under the cognizance of its ministers. The civil authority did indeed anticipate the Church in its inquiries concerning certain offences; but she nevertheless retained her right of spiritual jurisdiction, in all cases whatsoever. Crimes of every name were the fit objects of her maternal discipline: civil suits and controversies also on questions of right and property appertained to her tribunal, inasmuch as the Church should arbitrate in the disagreements of her members. Thus it was that canon law, if not actually stretched over all secular judicatures, was held to be capable of being so extended, and was kept in abeyance only by the concession or connivance of ecclesiastical rulers.

This universal jurisdiction or judicial right of the Church, in civil as well as criminal causes, derived from the acknowledged duty of a Christian society to exercise discipline over

its members, and to prevent litigation, if possible, by amicably arbitrating between them in their differences, may, perhaps, under some future condition of the social system, demand to be considered and adjusted in a manner not hitherto thought of. Difficulties of a serious sort may hereafter present themselves on this ground. At present, no Christian community, actually exercising a vigilant, impartial, and effective discipline, has spread itself widely enough to give rise to those embarrassments that attend the collision of ecclesiastical with civil law. But we may readily imagine such a state of things; nay, we need not imagine it, for we have only need to recur to the history of the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries, to find manifold examples of the confusion and perplexity, the jealousies and the feuds, that may spring from this source.

When church power, in the West, became ascendant, it was clearly perceived that, consistently with the principles on which it rested, no lower ground could be taken than that of affirming the abstract universality of canon law, and the unrestricted range of ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The only question that needed to be discussed was one of expediency and policy in particular instances, and in relation to the usages of nations, and the personal temper of princes—whether the Church should stretch her rod as far as she claimed the right to do, or give way

to the resolution or the obduracy of the secular authority. In her professions, and to a great extent, in fact, the Papacy, during its triumphant season, was absolute mistress of Christendom, in virtue of this, her office, as guardian of public morals.

Yet the Church took care to make her members feel that her power was of an intimate and refined sort, as well as public and juridical; and that it was spiritual more than carnal. The magistrate could inquire concerning overt acts only, and could punish nothing but crimes. The Church, on the contrary, penetrated the bosoms of men, dived into motives, put secret dispositions to the question, and dealt with men on the ground of a divine discernment of hearts. She professed to treat the subjects of her discipline not according to *evidence*, but according to truth itself. Auricular confession, therefore, was not an accident of this system of despotism; but one of its indispensable elements, and a chief means of its efficiency. The connexion of inferences by which this engine of power was compacted was very close;—pardon is lodged with the Church;—the means of remission by penance are also under the direction of the Church; but the priest, who in each instance administers this authority, can do so only by knowing the whole extent of guilt, and all its circumstances, as well of aggravation as extenuation. To expose the bosom to the priest

is, therefore, the only way in which remission of sin can be obtained: whoever then would escape punishment, must lay open to the Church his entire consciousness.

The punishments, or penances, enjoined by the Church (wherever she was actually in position to give effect to her rules of discipline) were by no means of a sort to be contemned. The conscience-stricken culprit, who sought a restoration to hope and to the consolations of religion, submitted himself often to five, ten, or twenty years of public humiliation and private torture—bodily and mental. As much of misery as human nature can sustain, was, as a common thing, inflicted by the Church upon her guilty sons and daughters. The penalties of modern law are trivial, compared with those of the Church. She was indeed "a TERROR to evil-doers."

3dly. The Church not only claimed and exercised all power on earth, but stretched her tremendous hand over Hades, and disposed of destinies in the future world. She was sovereign of souls. Without this awful prerogative her authority would have been at once incomplete and insecure. The wretched objects of her vengeance might have sought to hide themselves in the grave, or might have sighed and comforted themselves in expectation of that clemency which the Divine tribunal admits. But there could be no escape from the arm of the Church. The fires of purgatory were blown

or quenched at her beck; her hand even delved into the cold sepulchre, and reeked revenge upon the guilty dust of her foes: the torments of eternity were heaped upon her enemies, and the thrones of glory bestowed upon her friends. Nothing which the human mind can imagine or rest in, as an ideal solace, was free to be hoped for without the leave of the Church; there was nothing terrible which she might not inflict. Instead of its being said to the faithful at large, as it was by an apostle — "all things are YOURS," the Church, that is to say, its rulers, turned to the laity, and proclaimed their own universal lordship; — "all things are ours, whether life, or death, or things present, or things to come, ALL ARE OURS."

That complicated system of observances and superstitious notions which had reference to the condition of souls in the unseen world, was an integral part of the great scheme of despotism, and was employed to sustain and extend it, in every way which the idle or the well-founded fears of the people made practicable, or which their corrupt inclinations invited. The viaticum and extreme unction—the prayers for the dead, and masses for the delivery of souls—the intercession of saints—the practice of canonization, and the pronouncing of anathemas, were all so many expressions or practical exhibitions of the invisible jurisdiction of the Church. From whatever source these opinions and usages had

at first sprung, and most of them are of high antiquity, the Church, of a later time, wrought them into her frame-work, and they became indispensable to her security.

The power of the Church then, as keeper of truth, as guardian of morals, and as disposer of souls, embraced every thing—provided for every thing, and applied itself to the entire surface of human nature, and of the social system. This despotism was at once spiritual and political, visible and invisible; nothing could be more refined; nothing could be more substantial: nothing could better adapt itself to minds of the sensitive and enthusiastic class; nothing grasp with a stronger arm the sensual and audacious. In the highest meaning which the terms will bear, the Romish tyranny was universal and absolute. Men could not think or inquire even concerning the processes of the material world, and the laws of matter and motion, without treading upon ground which the Church had preoccupied;—all philosophy was either orthodox or heterodox; and a man might be burned for an opinion in mechanics, as well as for an opinion in theology. There could be no possession or enjoyment of the goods of life, no marrying, no inheriting, no devising, no ruling, no judging, no speaking, no feeling, no thinking—there could be no living and no dying without the leave of the Church, or apart from her favour.

This well-compacted scheme was too complete, if we might say so, in its theory and principles, to be ever fully brought to bear, without friction, upon the social machinery. During the period which we designate as the dog-days of spiritual despotism, it wanted indeed very little to make it practically, as well as theoretically entire. Yet, even then there was always, in one quarter or in another, a resistance, a remonstrance, and a voice of reason and humanity, to which it was felt something must be conceded. But if the theory of sacerdotal tyranny could not be absolutely realized during ages of extreme barbarism, it is manifest that it could never be maintained along with the expansion of the human understanding, with the diffusion of science and literature, or with the establishment of free political systems. In fact, as every one knows, it fell from its height at the moment of the revival of the European mind, and has been sensibly declining from that time to this. Rather than take wing, and leave the earth for ever, Romanism may adapt itself to those conditions of subordination and political insignificance which are at present imposed upon it; but every one of these unwilling concessions is a stroke at its life—an essential inconsistency, a dereliction of its professed duty, and a surrender of the fundamental axioms upon which its polity rests.

The intelligent members of the Romish Church will not, nor can they affirm, that the doctrine, discipline, polity, and usages of the Papacy, as expounded by Innocent III. and Gregory IX., were not the genuine elements of the religious system which had come down to them from a higher age. It will not be pretended that those pontiffs were innovators and originators of a new order of things: on the contrary, they were eminently faithful stewards of St. Peter's house. And was not the Church in a condition then more consistent with its theory and with its professed principles than it has ever been since, or is at present? This must surely be granted:—the Church, in the twelfth century, was HERSELF: but now she can no longer discharge her duties, or effect her will, or secure the welfare of her members. To what sort of revolutions then are the adherents of the Papacy looking, as likely to bring about its restoration? Must not the European commonwealth first forfeit political liberty, extinguish the light of philosophy, blot out the discoveries of science, and, in a word, drink of the cup of universal forgetfulness? Is it thus, and at such a cost, that the apostolic Roman Catholic Church is to regain its empire? Is this what we ought to mean and to desire, when we speak of the future triumph of the Gospel, and the millennium of human felicity?

The Papacy of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries prepared its own fall, by openly

encouraging, or by conniving at, flagrant abuses, not warranted by its maxims, and which roused the indignation of princes, and excited the contempt and abhorrence of the mass of the people. It is thus that ancient structures meet their ruin. Absurdly confiding in the strength which immemorial prescription, and the steadfastness of popular prejudices impart, their adherents fondly believe that the most shameless excesses of official profligacy will be borne with: — they scorn to suppose that any will dare to assail, or will succeed in assailing, venerable and entrenched corruptions. This illusion is the last dream of pampered hierarchs. So well compacted, and so accordant were the abstract principles of the Romish tyranny, and so firmly and fully was it sanctioned in every one of its main articles of belief and worship, by the authority of the earlier ages, that it may fairly be questioned whether the Reformation would have been attemped at all, or could have been carried forward, if the Church had been provident enough to remove the grosser scandals that attached to her practices; and had brought herself back, or nearly so, to the ideal of her constitution.

Had not Rome made the yoke she imposed intolerable, princes would have been slow to listen to the argument which called in question the foundations of the papal authority; and had not the vices and the knavery of the monks and

clergy reached an extreme that rendered the Church the object of the people's execration and derision, the Reformers might have found it impracticable to disengage the popular mind from its thraldom.

The authors and supporters of vast schemes of despotism are often wise and politic, but not wise enough; or not wise enough to arrest the advances of arrogance within limits of safety. If the Roman pontiffs had conceded something to the Eastern Church, and to the principal sees of the West; if they had believed that they should stand firmer, propped by the arms of colleagues and coadjutors, than reared aloft upon the shoulders of vassals;—if they had given way, with a good grace, to princes on the question of investiture;— if they had drawn in the horns of canon law, and had modestly declined to exercise any jurisdiction not manifestly pertaining to the spiritual interests of the Church;—if they had refused to protect atrocious clerical culprits from the arm of the secular power;—if they had enforced the rules of religious houses, and had brought monkery up to its own professions; and if, moreover, it could have been found practicable to repress heresy without massacres, crusades, and cruelties;—if all this had been done, we may imagine it as at least possible that this mighty scheme of spiritual empire would have continued, sound and unassailed, to the present moment.

The want of so much prudence and moderation on the part of the papal court, brought the system into a position that demanded a course of procedure continually more and more outrageous and despicable, until sentiments of indignation were suffused through all ranks, and in almost all catholic countries. So vehement and general was this feeling, that it seemed to threaten the entire structure of the Church with instantaneous demolition. The Church was however saved — and saved, not merely through the inveteracy of the superstitions of the common people, nor by the rescuing hand of individual princes; and certainly not by the personal merits and virtues of its sacerdotal champions; but by the interior strength of its theory; and by the indisputable antiquity of every main article of its faith, worship, and discipline.

As the Church fell (so far as it fell) by the means of its *accidental abuses*, so was it saved (so far as it was saved) by virtue of its abstract principles, and by the high sanction of its creeds and ceremonies. Intelligent readers of the story of the Reformation have probably very often wondered why the mighty reforming movement, which spread so far, did not spread further, and have been amazed that the Papacy, corrupt as it was, should yet actually have withstood so rude a shock. We must find a solution of the natural and reasonable question which this perplexing

fact suggests, by duly considering that, while on the one hand, the Papacy had fallen into a condition which rendered it vulnerable on every side, it was, at the same time, strong both in principles, and in authorities, to which the Reformers themselves paid homage. After three centuries of free inquiry, deliberate reflection, and Biblical intelligence, it is much more than we can say, that we have ourselves got clear of the theory of the Papacy in every one of its articles; and assuredly we are far from having as yet thrown off all those superstitions that sprung up in the second and third centuries, and which the Romish Church inherited and expanded.

Let us then candidly admit the serious truth, That what stayed the downfal of the Papacy, three hundred years ago, and what has given it a lengthened life, was certain principles, not yet altogether renounced by ourselves, and the retention of which has turned aside the weapons of our protestant warfare.

The Lutheran Reformation was a glorious beginning, that waits for its consummation. Had it indeed been complete and consistent in principle and in practice, it would have been universal in its actual spread. The Papacy still lives, and it must live, until Protestantism shall be reformed.

Little difficulty would perhaps now be found in thoroughly dispelling what remains among us of the theoretic portion of the ancient

despotism; but some real perplexities attend the clearing away of those notions and usages that have come down from the times immediately succeeding the apostolic age. We are still entangled in the snares woven in the age of Irenæus, Justin Martyr, and Cyprian. The argument for Popery is at present drawn from the authority of those ancient errors; and the weakness of Protestantism comes from the same source. Romanism sucks one breast of the pristine Church, Protestantism another; but the milk which nourishes the stomach of the first, sickens that of the last.

Although the prosecution of our immediate argument does not demand it, the author feels almost compelled to turn aside, for a moment, to contemplate the "Great Wonder" of the Papal Despotism in the light in which it appears in connexion with the truth of Christianity.

Let it then be calmly considered that the Papacy, such as we find it in the age of its consummation, was in no important sense the creation of that same age, nor the product of the seven preceding centuries, during which the Roman pontiffs had occupied a clear field for effecting their project of universal supremacy. Nor dare we assign its commencement to the ambiguous period of rather more than two hundred years, that intervenes between the conversion of Constantine, and the pontificate of

Gregory the Great. With the remains of Christian antiquity before us, it is impossible in candour to deny that the vast scheme of mingled superstition and despotism which grasped the western nations in the age of Gregory IX. differed from the Christianity of the third century more in extent than in quality, more in form than in substance, more in arrogance of mouth, than in heart and disposition, more in power, than in will: or in a word, that the one was like the other, as the full-blown flower is like the bud.

By steps, too insensible and easy to admit of their being now distinctly traced, the religious system professed in the Christian Church, had, in the course of two hundred years, reckoning from the death of the last of the apostles, become capitally distinguished from the Christianity of the apostles; and from that time onward continued to move, with a steady and uniform progress, and always straight-forward, until it presents itself to view in the terrible sublimity of a monstrous tyranny, unmatched in cruelty, perfidy, and profligacy.

With the New Testament in our hands, it is no difficult task to disengage ourselves, in succession, from each one of the popish superstitions. Taking the words of Christ and his apostles as our sole and sufficient authority, in belief and worship, we spurn, without a doubt, this long train of pernicious absurdities.—What

have we to do with the "tremendous sacrifice" of the mass, with the adoration of the mother of God, with prayers for the dead, or with prayers to them, or with the intercession of saints, or with the seven sacraments, or with holy water, holy oil, holy vestments, and crossing of the forehead; with the worship of images, pictures, and relics; with penance, purgatory, auricular confession, indulgences, and works of supererogation; with monkery and celibacy, or with lying miracles? The modern Christian, Bible in hand, throws off these follies and abominations, as a man would rend from his shoulders a fool's chequered coat, that had been forced upon him. But in doing so, how little does he ordinarily recollect that he is treating with contempt (a deserved contempt indeed) the sense, practice, and persuasion of the Christian community, almost from the first, and almost universally? These very usages, these ceremonies, sentiments, opinions, sprung up, we hardly know how, in the earliest times, obtained the approval, in long succession, of every leading and accomplished mind, of all the Fathers, Doctors, and Rulers of the Church—of confessors and of martyrs!

Nevertheless nothing else can be done, but to set at nought this weight and universality of authority;—we must choose between the Scriptures and the Church; and we choose the Scriptures. This election is made without

anxiety. The Christianity of the Scriptures is thus rescued; and we enjoy and hold it fast; but then, when we turn back to think of the Christianity of the Papacy, and recollect how broadly it was bottomed, how abundantly it was sanctioned, and especially how insensibly and involuntarily it became what at length it was, and remember too that it has filled a vast space of time, even while the millions of millions of fifty generations of men have gone through their term on earth;—when considerations such as these are vividly entertained, the mind sinks under its own sad and racking reflections. What and where has been our Christianity through these vast cycles of time!

A sound mind, however, does not brood long over depths it cannot fathom; but rather turns to what is certain, and practically clear and palpable.—The independent evidences on which our faith rests are not any way touched by perplexities of this kind. We may nevertheless reasonably make search, among these evidences, for some prophetic indications of what was in fact to happen. How depressing soever may be the thought of an apostasy of sixteen hundred years, yet our faith is rather confirmed than weakened, if we find this "falling away" to have been pictured in its great outlines and colours upon the pages of the inspired writers.

If the prophetic voice which was heard so often in the times of the old dispensation speaks

also in the new, and if indeed the Papacy be what Protestants think it, there will then be the strongest imaginable antecedent probability that this great apostasy must find a prominent place in the perspective of ages. If not, what are we to conclude? That the Papacy, after all, was complacently foreknown as the bright consummation of Christianity? or that, being such as we deem it, corrupt, mischievous, abominable, it nevertheless was lightly accounted of by Heaven, and regarded as an inconsiderable accident of human affairs, and less worthy to be pointed at by the finger of Omniscience, than the fortunes of the Roman empire, the fate of battles, the conquests of Saracens, the triumphs of Turks? This is hard to admit. On the contrary, it is with a strong, and even peremptory expectation that we turn to the inspired pages in search of what, if it stands there at all, will doubtless wear no ambiguous colours. The premonition of so mighty an object, and one marked by characteristics so broad, will be conveyed in symbols that shall arrest the eye, and command the convictions of every plain and vigorous understanding. After ingenious sophisticated criticism has done its utmost to put another meaning upon the prophetic passage, its obvious sense, in all the freshness of truth, shall return upon our minds; and the more so, in proportion to the exactness and familiarity of our acquaintance with the system

which we assume to have been the antitype of the prophecy.

These very predicaments we hold to attach to the often cited passages in the Pauline epistles, and to certain portions of the Apocalypse. True it is that there is not a prophecy of the Old Testament, or of the New, which erudite obliquity, or the affectation of originality and of superiority to common prejudice, has not attempted to turn aside from its obvious import. But if every such attenuated criticism is to be respectfully listened to, we shall do better to close the prophetic Scriptures at once; for it is manifest that, if so handled, the study of them can subserve no valuable purpose. Nay, instead of furnishing invincible proof of the divine origin of the writings that contain them, these prophetic passages plunge us in difficulties not to be evaded.

Did the apostles entertain the hope of a speedy and triumphant spread of Christianity through the world? It does not appear that they did. Whatever bright dreams they might have indulged during the term of their Lord's ministry, no trace of any such expectation is to be found in their discourses or epistles. The ancient promise of the ultimate, but remote prevalence of truth, does but dimly illumine their pages. Their immediate prospect, it is manifest, was altogether of a different kind, and the fact of deliberately entertaining such a

prospect, on the part of the promulgators of a new religion, has great weight in relation to the genuineness of their testimony. They expected nothing better than bonds, imprisonments, and every sort of hostility from the world. But this is not all, for they expected also heresies, corruptions, delusions, to spring from the bosom of the Church itself. If this anticipation be regarded as resulting simply from their own sober estimate of human nature, and their knowledge of the ordinary course of human affairs, it affords a most conclusive evidence of their personal freedom from extravagance and enthusiasm: or if we attribute it to the divine prescience specially conveyed to them, then the history of the Church comes in to illustrate the prophetic forewarning, and so to establish the truth of Christianity.

But let us for a moment give attention to the terms in which these melancholy anticipations are expressed: we shall find that there is a progression from a style of general and comprehensive intimation, to language the most special and determinate.

"I know," says Paul, in addressing the elders of the Ephesian Church, "I know that, after my departing, grievous wolves shall enter in, not sparing the flock:" that is to say, merciless persecutors. And also that, "from among yourselves, shall some spring up, who, for the purpose of making themselves the heads of

a party, shall teach a perverted doctrine." The mischiefs that were to arise from spiritual ambition are here anticipated; yet this is only a half of the caution which the apostle's prescience prompted him to give. He foresaw what, in fact, proved to be the main means of corrupting Christianity, namely—the opportunity which the teachers of this powerful doctrine too soon found for converting it into an engine of extortion;—not indeed by the aid of statutes, but by the abuse of that voluntary system upon which, unavoidably, the ministers of religion were to be thrown. He points these elders to the disinterestedness of his own conduct; "I have coveted no man's silver or gold;" and concludes his energetic exhortation by that maxim of the Lord which, as he foresaw, the heads of a voluntary society would most of all need to keep in mind, namely—"That it is more blessed to give than to receive." From certain passages of his epistles it appears that he lived to see his sad expectation realized, and that while he and his colleagues were yet present in the Churches, there were those who "made a gain of godliness," and, with the worst intentions, tickled the ears of the people with the flattering sounds of a corrupted and corrupting Gospel. So far, then, it is plain, that the CHIEF OCCASION of the early perversion of Christianity, namely, the natural, and almost inevitable abuse to which the voluntary principle is liable, was

distinctly anticipated by St. Paul. Though unable to place the Christian polity on any other foundation, from the actual circumstances of its first promulgation, he was not blind to what would be its consequences.

St. Peter, likewise, we find to have had the same clear (and no doubt divinely imparted) foresight of these very evils. The abuses which began to work in his own time, and which we trace regularly in their increase from the apostolic age till the Papacy was ripened, he depicts in the most specific terms. "There were false prophets among the (ancient) people; even as there shall be false teachers among you, who shall insinuate destructive errors, ... and who, in their rapacity, shall make a merchandize of you." The parallel passage in the Epistle of Jude presents the same characteristics—the future corrupters of truth would be such as "run greedily in the way of Balaam, for reward."

Another portraiture of the corrupted Christianity which was soon to prevail, though not given in prophetic form, occurs in the Epistle to the Colossians; nor can we fail to catch the features of its specious pietism, such as—the enforcement of arbitrary observances in relation to meats, and drinks, and festivals—an affected demureness—the veneration paid to celestial beings—the rigid abstinence from things lawful—the multiplication of canons and human constitutions,

and the false recommendation these errors should receive from their apparent tendency to promote self-denial, lowliness of spirit, and abstracted devotion. It is remarkable that, in introducing his caution against these flattering perversions, the apostle employs the very term, "philosophy"—"vain deceit" as it was, which, at a very early time, was adopted, and long continued to be a cant phrase, and the conventional designation of the system and the principle of monkery. The meditative, abstemious, and solitary life was called the 'divine philosophy:' so it is perpetually described by its advocates in the third and fourth centuries.

We come next to formal predictions: such is to be reckoned that noted passage in the Second Epistle to Timothy. In every age and country, mankind at large have too nearly answered to the description which the apostle there advances as specially characteristic of a future era. There would therefore be no significance whatever in a prediction of this sort, understood as being vaguely applicable to the open world. But it acquires pertinence by being attached to the Church, as distinguished from the world. Indeed, this sense of the prediction is determined by the closing phrase, in which those spoken of are said to possess a form or semblance of religion, though they reject what might render it efficacious.

"This know that (instead of the triumphant

spread of pure religion which might be expected to take place in these last days) the coming era shall be difficult and dangerous; for (the professors of Christianity) shall (*as such*) be interested, avaricious, boastful, high-minded, impious in language, regardless of natural relationships, ungracious, unholy, insensible to the common charities of life, violators of their solemn engagements, false accusers, intemperate, fierce, contemners of the good, treacherous, precipitate, inflated, lovers of pleasure more than of God" (even while professing a mode of life which renounces pleasure for the sake of God.)

Now whether or not we think these phrases to be fairly susceptible of a close and specific application to the church corruptions that were soon to prevail (and several of them are remarkably characteristic) yet the passage, taken in its widest application, is proof that the apostle distinctly anticipated an extensive and extreme perversion of the religion he was aiding to set up in the world. If we met with no other prediction, or none more definite, this would be enough for our present argument, and would alone reconcile the truth of Christianity with the fact of its general and speedy perversion.

The first epistle to the same individual contains a formal prophecy, announced in terms that should command our most serious regard, when endeavouring to fix their application. To whom then does this prediction attach? Among

all the parties that have divided the Christian body, is there one whose characteristic usages or doctrines are here pointed to? Let the passage be read as if for the first time, and before we have heard it applied to one party or to another—"But the Spirit distinctly announces that, in the latter seasons (of the Church) some shall apostatize from the faith; for they shall give heed to deceitful spirits, and to the teachings of dæmons (or to doctrines concerning dæmons) under a false pretence uttering lies; having their conscience cauterized;—forbidding to marry, and (enjoining) abstinence from meats, which God hath created for our grateful use."

When a description, such as this, meets us, divinely authenticated, we are surely bound to observe a religious ingenuousness in expounding it on none other than those broad and intelligible principles of common sense which are every where assumed, in Scripture, as the basis of God's communications with men. But if a doubt remained, our part is again to compare Scripture with Scripture.

Is then the fact of a great and fatal apostasy in any other place predicted? The noted prophecy which presents itself in answer to this question should be examined apart from its assumed application to the Papacy, and after an independent analysis of its terms, we should look abroad over the field of history, as con-

nected with Christianity, and fix where we may, upon an archetype;—or if none appears that fairly corresponds to the prediction, then conclude that the whole yet remains to be fulfilled.

"Do not," says the apostle, "so interpret any thing I may have uttered, either orally or in my letters, as that your minds should be agitated by an expectation of the immediate appearance of the Lord, and of our gathering together to him. Let none delude you, or distract your spirits, and divert you from your ordinary duties, by any such supposition as that the day of the Lord is at hand. I now repeat what you must remember I said when I was with you, that it shall not be until there first come THE APOSTACY, and that sinful personage be manifested—who is consigned to perdition, who places himself in opposition (to the truth), who exalts himself to the seat of supreme religious regard, nay, above every other acknowledged object of reverence, so that seating himself in the temple of God, he puts himself forth as a god . . . Calling to mind what I said when with you, you will not need now to be told what restrains this (arrogant power) and delays its manifestation, until the destined season. And yet the mysterious (or now concealed) wickedness, is actually at work; and only waits until the restraining power shall be removed. Then the lawless one shall be revealed, whom (at last) the Lord Jesus shall destroy by the

spiritual efficacy of his word, and bring to nothing by the splendour of his appearing;—shall destroy him, I say, who exhibits himself in satanic energy, with might, and signs, and lying wonders, and who, with all the knavery of wickedness (maintains his influence) over the lost . . . ."

Now among all the persons, or powers, or corporations, hitherto manifested in the world, in connexion with Christianity, our part is to choose the one, in whom, or in which, *every* characteristic of the prediction is fairly embodied. Is it Judaism? But Judaism, as the antagonist of Christianity, was as fully revealed in the apostle's time, as at any later period; nor was it the mark of Judaism to usurp divine honours, or to profess miraculous powers. Can it be Julian, the apostate? But Julian did not fall by the efficacy of the divine word; nor was his fall followed by the appearing of Christ; nor was his adverse influence in any imaginable sense at work three centuries before his birth. Is it any noted heresiarch, or any separate community, that has pretended to divine honours and appealed to miracles?—we know of none. Is it Mohammed? But in what sense was Mohammed, or his system at work, or in preparation to work, in the apostolic age? nor did the Arabian prophet pretend to miraculous powers: on the contrary, he distinctly disclaimed them: nor did he ever employ a blasphemous

style, such as should lead his followers to forget that he was simply human;—the very characteristic of Mohammedism is its careful and jealous regard to the honour of the only God. Is then the apostate or the apostacy we are in quest of, yet in the womb of futurity? If so, whenever he, or it, appears, there must be some ingenuous sense in which a connexion may be traced back from it or from him, to the apostolic age, and it must be fairly shown that the iniquity, *then at work*, was "held back" by some power then existing, and which has continued to exist, and is now extant, and in active operation.

Can we be satisfied to search among obscure and hitherto unnoticed objects, persons, or powers, and to haul out, by the aid of erudition, from the lumber-room of antiquity, some long-forgotten personage that may answer our challenge? This were an idle industry: no lanthern, we may be assured, can be needed to find St. Paul's "Man of sin." We conclude that, after learning has done its utmost, either to clear up the terms, or to turn aside their obvious application, the common sense of ninety-nine out of a hundred impartial persons would lead them, without hesitation, to name the Papacy as the intended archetype of the prophecy before us; and that they would confess the exactness, and the special propriety of every one of the designations which it presents, as so applied.

The spiritual despotism, and the fraudulent superstition, afterwards expanded in the Papacy, were actually making their preparations in the apostolic age; the corruption, which in the next century stood out to view, was then a cloaked but active mischief. The papal usurpation, which drew to itself, employed, and patronized, all the superstitions of the earlier ages, was held in check, and kept in obscurity, so long as the imperial power retained its seat at Rome; and it made its triumphant entry upon the world when the western empire fell. The Papacy usurped divine prerogatives; set itself above all law, human and divine; claimed worship, and actually invaded the names and titles of Deity. The Papacy erected its throne, and sat down in the temple of God—the Church: it has swayed the nations with a satanic pride, insolence, and energy, and has sustained itself, mainly, by an appeal to miracles—miracles impudently false. Finally, the Papacy has given way before the diffusion of the Scriptures—the spiritual efficacy of the word of Christ; and by its own confession, it can never stand where the Bible is allowed to remain in the hands of the people.

Do we yet want reasons for believing that the Papacy is the apostacy predicted by Paul?

It is not necessary to pursue the argument as affected by the apocalyptic prophecies: nor indeed is the evidence thence resulting susceptible of condensation. It is enough, in reply

to those difficulties that spring from the melancholy fact of the long-continued perversion of Christianity, that we are able to say—this fact, melancholy as it is, stands predicted and set forth in its peculiar characteristics, on the pages of the New Testament. The book then is divine, whatever may have been, during some centuries, the fate of the religious system it contains.

The subject of this section must not be dismissed without a monitory word.—The error of Protestants has been the thinking and speaking of POPERY as the creature of the times of the PAPACY; whereas, it is the creature of almost the earliest times to which our materials enable us to trace the opinions and usages of the Church. This mistake has not merely thrown an advantage into the hands of our opponents, who have exulted in being able to show the high antiquity of their faith and worship, but it has stopped, or rather precluded, an inquiry, than which none can be much more important, namely, How far do we retain, or are infected by the superstitions generated in the second and third centuries? We have indeed discarded the Papacy; but are we clean escaped from the popery of Cyprian and Dionysius? A full exhibition of the superstitions of the primitive ages is now what is peculiarly needed as preparatory to a thorough return to apostolic Christianity.

In truth, our protestant Christianity of to-day,

is labouring under the inert residues, or lees, of three grand perversions; namely, the superstitious corruptions, already mentioned, of the martyr Church—the metaphysic and dialectic corruptions of the times of the schoolmen—and the metaphysic and logical corruptions of the system-making theologians of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It is well understood that our remedy, in each case, lies (under the Divine guidance) in a diligent and wisely-conducted process of biblical interpretation. Nevertheless, the results of this process may be brought more forcibly to bear upon existing errors, by exhibiting, historically, their rise and growth. Towards this latter necessary work, the author desires to contribute what aid he may; and with this view proposes, in another volume, to convey the substance of his researches concerning early superstitions, and especially such of them as have survived in Protestantism.

In these errors all modern sects have, more or less, been implicated;—some directly, and others by antithesis, or reaction; and the author hazards the conjecture that it will be found an easier thing to effect a disengagement from implications of the former sort, than from those of the latter:—or, in plain terms, and to come to specific instances, that the English Church—pursuing those ingenuous researches that are on foot among her accomplished clergy, will reject certain superstitions of pristine origin,

long before our dissidents will be brought to reconsider the notions and practices which their opposition to those errors has entailed upon them. How worthy the ambition, should the English Episcopal Church imbibe it, of taking the lead in a return to primitive Christianity!

SECTION VIII.

SPIRITUAL DESPOTISM SUPPLANTED BY SECULAR TYRANNY.

THE compass and range of the understanding, and the quality of a man's religious sentiments, might be judged of, not uncertainly, by the light in which he is accustomed to regard the Lutheran Reformation. The protestant partisan, controvertist, and zealous polemic, for example, delights to contemplate the giant energy and moral valour of those champions of Truth, who, in the strength of faith, of right reason, and of Scripture, "subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens."—The partisan, we say, in his admiration of what was effected by the Reformers, regards the reformation as a consummated work, or very nearly so; and having chosen his patron saint from among the illustrious band, whether

it be Luther, or Calvin, Bucer, Melancthon, Zuingle, Knox, or Cranmer, thinks of nothing beyond what he finds in that favourite doctor's theological system and polity.

On the other hand, the plain-minded and devout Christian thinks, and with great reason, of the Reformation as God's interposition in behalf of his Church and truth: he thinks of it as a rescue of the Scriptures, as a recovery of the great principles of the Gospel, and as the overthrow of satanic power;—an overthrow that will be followed, in due time, by the universal spread of pure and spiritual Christianity. This feeling and view, as it is substantially sound, so is it always proper.

But there is yet an opinion of the Lutheran Reformation entertained by those who, using themselves to institute impartial comparisons of religious systems, decline either to accept, or to reject, any particular recension of Christianity, in mass; and especially, who anxiously desire to see Christianity freed from the bonds of every peculiar version, and given to mankind in its primitive energy. These, while they cordially join with the devout Christian in his grateful celebration of that divine goodness to which we owe our deliverance from the horrors of the Papacy, are yet compelled to grant that the Reformation, on very many points, and on some of prime importance, was deeply affected by the errors, ignorance, and vehement prejudices that

commonly attach to humanity. The Reformation they think of as a mighty convulsion, favourable in the main to truth and liberty; but a convulsion which, as it was violent in itself, so likewise subsided long before necessary reforms had been completed. Those who admit these views, therefore, cheerfully granting, as they do, the deserved honour to the protestant heroes and martyrs, are very far from being content with what was then effected; and on the contrary, now direct their hopes, and bend their endeavours, toward the achievement of a second reformation, scarcely less important than the first.

With the faults of the theological systems handed down to us by the founders of our Protestant Churches, we have nothing here to do. But of their notions of church power and church polity it must be said that they were, in almost every sense, and in an extreme degree, confused and erroneous. The Reformers brought into play principles from which, in the end, the liberties we now enjoy naturally resulted; but we owe them few thanks on this behalf; they intended no such thing as that spiritual despotism, in its substance, should be dissipated; they meant indeed to shift it from its old bottom; yet to build it up anew, and, as they thought, on a better model. The ecclesiastical consequences of the Reformation have an analogy with what has frequently followed civil

contests between rival pretenders to a crown, when the one party, and generally the assailant party, having called to its aid the middle classes, and having, as a bribe, conceded large privileges to them, popular rights and liberties have been permanently secured. Nothing else could happen but that the Reformation should, in the end, bring about the establishment of religious liberty; yet such was not either its purport, or its principle.

Speaking at large, and particular exceptions allowed for, the reformers inherited from the Papacy, and retained, its intolerance, its gloomy sternness, and very much of its superstition. But the papal intolerance was a proper element of the theory on which it was founded; and however cruel in fact, yet it drew its reasons from intelligible grounds. The Church being infallible, never incurred the hazard of inflicting its chastisements upon the innocent; and being supernaturally empowered to maintain and defend the truth, had nothing to think of but faithfully and effectively to perform its duty. On the contrary, the Reformers, by renouncing infallibility, and by disclaiming miraculous attestations of their ministry, left themselves open to the heaviest possible imputation of arrogance, and of cruelty, while they employed the sword and brand against their opponents.

If popish intolerance counts many more victims than protestant intolerance can pretend

to, that of the latter is, on every ground, less justifiable; or, we should say, less susceptible of palliation, than the former: it was practised under a fuller light of scriptural knowledge, it was essentially inconsistent with the principles on which the Reformation proceeded, and it wanted that specious pretext of supernatural guidance and infallibility, which might appear, even to the most upright members of the Romish Church, conclusive and sufficient.

None who consider the intimate connexion that binds the various elements of religious systems, can suppose that the circumstance of our having received our theology and our polity from men fatally wrong on the great question of religious liberty and the rights of conscience, can have failed to place us in a highly disadvantageous position: it has, in fact, entangled us in very serious (if not hopeless) embarrassments. To this source, in great measure, may be traced the present disparagements and perils of our national establishment; and, again, it is to their having stood in opposition to a polity embodying the errors of the reformers, that the several classes of Dissenters in England, owe, at once, their strength, and the exaggeration of their theoretic principles. Every error repeats itself in the antagonist opinion to which it gives rise; and it usually happens that grievous practical faults generate, as their reverse, hypothetic principles

proportionably extravagant. If the Dissenters of the present day would but apply to their own case, with a manly impartiality, those general maxims that result from a wide survey of religious history, they would acknowledge it to be certain, that their own ecclesiastical system, inasmuch as it sprung by reaction from the intolerant notions and practices of the Reformers, has been thrown far from the centre of truth and reason. Whatever we hold as an inheritance from our ancestors of the sixteenth century, whether it have come to us directly, or circuitously, should now be calmly reconsidered and reformed. Nor is such a revision likely to be less needed on the one side than on the other, of our religious parties.

The principle of the spiritual despotism maintained and exercised by the Papacy broke in upon protestant establishments, under the most preposterous conditions that could be imagined; and if the grand corrective of the diffusion of the Scriptures had not contained an antidote for every evil, the church-and-state, or, we ought rather to say, the king-and-church tyranny that supplanted the tyranny of Rome, would have proved itself by far the more insufferable and cruel of the two.

In the protestant countries, and especially in England, the people at large, and the *native*

secular clergy, at the era of the Reformation, lost a protector, and found a despot in their sovereign. Heretofore the kings of England, for their own sakes, and for the public good, had mediated with Rome; they had resisted encroachments, and had stood as the guardians of the realm, repelling and excluding so much of the spiritual despotism of the Papacy as could be resisted without openly renouncing allegiance to St. Peter's representative. The history of Europe during the two, or even three, centuries, that precede the Lutheran Reformation, turns very much upon this one point of the struggles—and, to a great extent, the successful struggles of the civil authority with the spiritual, and of its endeavours to reduce the latter within proper limits.

Those very usurpations and encroachments upon secular affairs, which the Church of the fourth century had carried far, and which the series of popes, from Gregory I. to Boniface VIII. effected, were, at the period of the Council of Constance, generally felt throughout Europe to be insufferable, and seemed likely to be resisted. The Pragmatic Sanction of the Gallican Church, the Statute of Præmunire in England, and the opinions boldly maintained abroad, and uttered in the Councils of Constance, Basle, and Bourges, all indicated a rapid advance of the public mind, such as made the ultimate reduction of the Papacy inevitable. The intrigues of

the cardinals did indeed successfully turn aside the direct course of reformation; but in each instance ground was really gained by the vanquished party, and as really lost by the conqueror. This is the ordinary course of events when the redress of old abuses is in progress—the partisans of corruption go on triumphing to their fall. A little more, and that sort of church-and-state system, or clear separation of spiritual and secular interests, and well defined adjustment of the two, which Constantine and his successors had failed to effect, would have been brought about in France, Germany, and England, if nowhere else.

The breaking forth of the Lutheran Reformation gave a counter direction to this movement within the Romish Church, and saved the Papacy. The Council of Trent sealed Romanism in its actual condition, and shut out every hope of reform, except that which open hostility might effect. This new turn of church affairs none can regret; for, although *external* abuses might probably have been remedied, there was little probability that the theology or the superstitions of the Church would have undergone correction at the same time. In these latter respects Rome was not to be reformed, but overthrown. Yet, so far as relates to the temporal power of the Papacy, its exactions, and its cruelty, and its insolent interference with national interests, there was

an emancipation in prospect, for all the European nations, which the Lutheran Reformation prevented, and which, the secular welfare of mankind only being considered, it did but partially compensate.

By a sidelong influence the Reformation set wrong that which had been getting right. Statesmen and nobles, and the more enlightened of the clergy, and even the people at large (we are now thinking especially of England) were fast coming, or had come, to a pretty well defined conception of the important distinction between secular and spiritual power, and were prepared for measures which would have reduced the papal authority, out of Italy, to a thin ether, visible to none but the clergy. The king, having a foreign interference to repel, would have stood in his natural place, as the guardian of the wealth of the country, from the fingers of Italian legates, as the patron of the native clergy, in opposition to Romish intrusions, and as the protector of the persons and property of the people against the inquisitorial cruelty of the Church in matters of imputed heresy.

But the fatal error of throwing into the hands of the civil authority both species of church power, namely, the purely spiritual, as well as the secular, at once made a tyrant of him who just before had stood in front of his people as guardian and deliverer. Every thing was

confounded, and every thing was lost in the doctrine of the royal supremacy in matters of religion. The advancing tide of opinion was vehemently thrown back; and no choice was left to the intelligent portion of the community but to hold to the Papacy, with all its superstitions; or, for the sake of a purer theology and worship, to cast themselves at the feet of the irresponsible, anomalous, capricious, and fierce tyranny of kings and queens.

Even during the hottest season of papal despotism, the people had possessed an important advantage, in well knowing the conditions and the meaning of the power to which they had to submit. The faith and discipline of the Church were fixed, its maxims and policy were, for the most part, uniform and steadily adhered to:—one pope indeed was more despotic than another; but the differences of personal disposition did not extensively affect the administration of the system toward the mass of the people. The severity of a tyranny is much assuaged by this sort of consistency and uniformity: only bow to a known, a long established, and an invariable authority, and you are safe.

But the inconstancy of the spiritual tyranny exercised by the Tudors and the Stuarts rendered it not more oppressive than horrible. Believe and worship with the monarch to-day,

and you might be burned for doing so to-morrow, perhaps by himself, or if not by himself, by his successor. The Church, the clergy, and the people, trembled in suspense from hour to hour, on the changeful whims of the royal theologue. Christendom hitherto had seen nothing at once so cruel and so ridiculous as was the usurpation of purely spiritual authority, by the kings and queens of England. The persecutions of the pagan Roman emperors tried the constancy, but did not rack the consciences, of the sufferers. The same may be said of the persecutions carried on by the Papacy. But the capricious barbarities perpetrated by the English sovereigns of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, exhibited spiritual ferocity under the most appalling of its forms, that namely which it puts on when, although its savage heart may be known well enough, its will and purpose none can certainly foretel. Those only could be secure whose determination was, to veer with the royal faith as steadily as the vane with the wind.

The fault—it might almost be called the treason—of the Fathers of the English Reformation, in surrendering the spiritual portion of Church power, along with the secular, to the monarch, may be extenuated on the plea that, in the distracted state of the country on matters of opinion, they had no other fulcrum but the throne on which to rest the lever of reform.

It was also their unhappiness, not their fault, to have to do, on so difficult an occasion, with a family the characteristic of which was an unbounded wilfulness, matched only by its preposterous pedantry. Constantine and his successors had entertained a sincere reverence for Christianity, and for its ministers; and indeed the errors of their religious administration resulted, in great part, from their superstitious tenderness toward the clergy. But our English monarchs were animated by that worst sort of religious sentiment—the thoroughly sophisticated pietism which belongs to an old corrupt worship, and which inspires an immensity of zeal, but no virtue, no fear, no modesty, no humanity.

Besides, at the era of the Reformation, princes had been long learning to suspect, to contemn, to hate, and to oppose, the clergy. Eminently learned, holy, and sincere, as were many of the reforming ministers, they belonged to a class that, for three centuries, had been every day more and more the objects of aversion or contempt. These ministers now approached the throne, entreating protection and aid, and the peculiar difficulties of their position led them to offer an incense to the monarch, which maddened his brain. The mischievous influence of this adulation continued to afflict the country a hundred and seventy years; and it still bears upon the Church with a serious disadvantage. To the present

day the English Establishment has not relieved itself of the humiliations that resulted from the surrender it at first made of its independence to the civil magistrate.

"His Majesty's Declaration," prefixed to the Thirty-nine Articles, and the thirty-seventh of those Articles, breathe an anxious ambiguity in every line. There is no want indeed of despotic purpose; but there is a consciousness, poorly concealed, of the utter incompatibility of the several principles assumed as the foundation of the new ecclesiastical government. Popes had bound consciences, and had forbidden dissent and discussion: but they had done so on clear ground; and they had pursued a course rationally adapted to their professions and their principles. But the head of the English Protestant Church, with a cruel liberality, allowed and promoted the diffusion of the Scriptures, sent abroad zealous preachers who, in assailing the old superstitions, constantly stayed themselves upon "God's word," and urged their hearers to "search and see if these things were so." And, all this while, the nation was solemnly told that, although the Church had power to decree rites and ceremonies, and had authority in controversies of faith, nevertheless "it was not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's word written, neither so to expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another." Who, then, was to decide between

Scripture and the Church; or, what mediate power was to satisfy the minds of those who might suspect such and such things to be unlawfully ordained? Was the Church to be the arbitress in her own cause? This were absurd indeed. But were the people to judge for themselves? So one might fairly suppose from this announcement of the limitation of church authority, and from the implied meaning of the authoritative diffusion of the Scriptures in the vernacular tongue, and from the appeals made to them by their new teachers. Yet this could not be when "THE LEAST DIFFERENCE" from the articles of religion was strictly prohibited, when "any varying or departing, in the least degree," therefrom was not to be "endured;" when, moreover, it was enjoined that "all curious search" concerning the meaning of the articles should be "laid aside;" and when, to seal religious discussion with the terrors of absolute power, it was declared that "*Christian men* may be punished with death for heinous and grievous offences."

It was then "His Majesty," or "Her Majesty," alone, who was arbiter of truth, and sovereign lord, as well of the lives and goods, as of the souls and consciences of the people. So far this absolute spiritual despotism was in harmony with what the Church had long admitted. The only innovation consisted in transferring irresponsible church power from spiritual to secular

hands. But this important substitution assumed a character of the most wanton cruelty, and of the most enormous inconsistency too, when it came to be conjoined with the protestant practice of rendering the Scriptures into the vernacular tongue, and of referring the people to them as the rule of faith. The page of history presents no parallel instance of frightful and ingenious tyranny. Had the framers of this atrocious anomaly no knowledge of the laws and impulses of human nature? You may indeed stupify the minds of men, and you may shut out every ray of light, and exclude every stirring excitement; and, having done so, then the despotism which forbids them to think or to speak is at least consistent with itself, and is in a sense merciful. Such had been the despotism of Rome. But to bring the minds of the people under the most intense religious excitements, wittingly to inflame them, and to inform them, to urge them, in thunders of eloquence, to think for themselves, to open upon their consciences all the powers of the future world; to tell them they were to stand singly at the bar of God, as responsible individually for their opinions and practices in religion, and then, after completing this mighty preparation, to prohibit, upon pain of death or imprisonment, the "least difference, or varying of belief," and "all curious search concerning doctrines," and actually to sustain these prohibitions with the sword, the brand,

the pillory, and the rack—this was indeed an intensity of malice never before matched upon earth; in exchange for it we must crave the inquisition of St. Dominic, and the crusades of Languedoc.

The despots—one might almost wish their names to be blotted from the page of English history — the protestant despots who were the authors of this barbarity, foresaw, as it appears, the impracticability of their own measures; and their language conveys all the incertitude and alarm that usually belong to the perpetrators of an atrocity which it is felt may probably be reflected upon its contrivers and agents. There is a dignity and calmness in the papal persecuting edicts, which is not at all found in the ecclesiastical declarations and the proclamations of the Tudors and Stuarts. Happily for England, and for the world, the monstrous inconsistencies involved in the measures of these princes were such as made the total defeat of them inevitable; and although at the cost of thousands of executions and imprisonments, the proper issue at length came about. The Bible, put into the hands of the people, took possession of the hearts of very many; and the horrid tyranny fell into the pit it had dug for the nation. Religious liberty was won for the British kingdoms, and a family incurably despotic forfeited a crown.

But although the arbitrary measures of our

reformation-princes have now been long obsolete, we are far from having, as yet, escaped from the evil consequences that have thence accrued. These may readily be enumerated; well were it if they could be spoken of as likely soon to be removed!

In the first place, the preposterous despotism out of the midst of which our English Reformation arose, has stained and tainted the Established Church, ever since, with an intolerance that lingers in the tempers and upon the tongues of some of its ministers. True it is, that every clergyman whose good sense entitles him to any regard, disclaims, with abhorrence, the practices and principles of persecution. Nevertheless, so numerous a hierarchy will include more than a few whose inferiority of understanding, and whose perversity of spirit, lead them to be blowing the embers of church pride and cruelty. The fire, therefore, is not extinguished; and not only are the smouldering fumes a great present annoyance, but they even trouble our feeling of security: it is impossible to say what accident may yet puff them into a flame. It would indeed be satisfactory if the Church, in a formal manner, were to step forth before the world, disclaiming, in so many words, the maxims of intolerance; and, as an indication of sincerity, expunging every offensive phrase by which her formularies are still blackened. This purgation concerns the honour of the Established Church much more

than it concerns the welfare of the nation. The former may indeed talk terrors a century longer, if she pleases; but the latter will listen at ease to such idle thunders. Impotent threats, harmless as they are to the objects of them, are really injurious to those who repeat them. When the Established Church shall become, in fact, the Church of the empire—and God grant this may at length happen—she must speak another language. If religious liberty is actually to be enjoyed within these kingdoms, not a phrase must remain among the offices, or the declarations, or the articles of the Church, which either openly insults that liberty, or which bears an ambiguous interpretation with respect to it.

In the next place; the early intolerance of our English Reformation—an intolerance that necessitated and justified the noble resistance made to it, first by the Puritans, and then by the Nonconformists—has transmitted to modern dissent a harboured grudge and exasperation of very evil consequence. As the Church still fans its obsolete intolerance, so does dissent fan its resentments. Brother against brother; Christian against Christian; such is the shame of our present religious condition; nor is it unlikely that the faults of the Fathers may be visited upon their descendants of the fifth generation; for the Established Church may yet have to regret her backwardness in disclaiming the

despotic principles of her founders; and the Dissenters, not able to attain Christian greatness of mind in this behalf, may be impelled by their cherished recollection of wrongs, to promote measures which, if effected, themselves would soon repent. A special motive for an oblivion of past injuries, were it wanted, might surely be found in a consideration of the fact, that the intolerance and cruelty of the Episcopal Church was the intolerance and the cruelty of almost every sect in the same age.

Again; the accidental circumstances of political disadvantage amid which the English Protestant Church took its rise, and which led its founders at once to flatter the monarch, and to encourage his despotic endeavours to secure uniformity, involved a hitherto unheard-of surrender of each of the most important and peculiar rights of a Christian community. The moment has at length, though late, arrived for the Church to be made to feel the error of her founders in this instance. Too long she has consented to be mocked with the empty forms of independence; and is now so placed that she must assert and regain her lost prerogatives, or fall lower still. The assembling in Convocation, effectively, at her own discretion, and for the exercise of substantial functions, the unprompted election of her bishops, and the absolute annulling and exclusion of lay encroachments upon ecclesiastical property, are obvious points

of that Church Reform which the course of events demands;—or we should rather call them, the necessary preliminaries of Church Reform.

Lastly, but by no means of least importance, the rise of the English Church Establishment from the midst of the atrocious despotisms of the Tudor and Stuart princes, has operated to throw a misunderstanding and an obloquy, perhaps not now to be removed, upon the notion of a Church-and-State system. We are bold to mention this as the great disadvantage of our present position. There seems hardly a hope of dissolving, in the public mind, the ancient and firm association of ideas which connects a church, by law established, and a church adjusted to the civil institutions of the country, with an assumption of control over the consciences of men, or with endeavours to compel or to bribe men to conformity; in a word, with the despotic feelings, language, and measures, of the seventeenth century.

All parties seem to concur, although in nothing else, yet in the unhappy endeavour to strengthen the above-named association of ideas, and to confuse and confound their own and others' conceptions of a Church-and-State alliance. And here it must be plainly confessed that the clergy of the Establishment, and its leaders and spokesmen, do not appear, as yet, so to have discharged from their own minds the

arrogant prejudices of the age gone by, as to impel them, in an ingenuous and explicit manner, to renounce certain ecclesiastical maxims, theories, and doctrines, now no longer to be endured. The champions of the Church are not, as their present interests should prompt them to be, zealous in holding up to public view the ideal of a national Church, absolutely purged of the leaven of despotism.

But if the Church does not use perspicuous language on this subject, and if the party whose welfare, nay existence, is mainly concerned herein, is blind to its safety, it is not to be expected that any of the opposing parties should endeavour to set it right. As well the irreligious and atheistic faction, as the dissidents, favour the impression that a national Church is necessarily a despotism; and they, one and all, avail themselves eagerly of every morsel of illiberality and intolerance that may happen to be showered from the Church press, in proof of the assumption, that an ecclesiastical establishment is, and must always be, arrogant and bigoted. To whom can we look, on any side, as willing, in good faith, to consider those measures which are now requisite for placing the Church in perfect accordance with the great principles of religious and civil liberty?

None who are accustomed to think, and are acquainted with history, can need to have it proved to them that, in the present condition of

the British empire, and in the actual state of public opinion, in this and other countries, a Church which professes and retains, or which does not utterly throw off, the insufferable and preposterous ecclesiastical principles of the Reformers, can have any other fate than that of working itself on to worse and worse ground, and of becoming, every year and day, feebler and more obnoxious. Neither statutes, nor the power of the aristocracy, nor the favour of kings—no, nor the power of Heaven itself, can prevent the decay and fall of a Church that, in the present day, advances, as its preliminaries, maxims essentially despotic. Whatever communion or corporation, within the bosom of a free country, takes its stand upon sectarian ground, although *now* it may be the largest, the most opulent, the most learned, and the most powerful of all sects, will never be more, or other, than A SECT; and almost certainly will go on narrowing its circle, until it has become as inconsiderable as any of its competitors; and, perhaps, the most inconsiderable of all. *Sects* may be sectarian, and yet, in a certain sense, may thrive; but to a NATIONAL CHURCH sectarianism must be fatal. At a time when the free discussion of all opinions, and the agitation of all interests, tends to bring every thing to find its real level, a sectarian national Church must suffer vastly more in the collision of parties than any other party can do; other bodies may have something to hope for, and to

gain, but the established party has every thing to fear, and to lose.

It is easy then to trace that connexion of causes which entails upon us, at the present moment, consequences of the most urgent and momentous kind, from the spiritual despotism of ages long gone by. The ghostly tyranny of the Papacy, taking its rise from almost the earliest age of the Church, reached a height that made it the dread mistress of the world. This tyranny was first resisted, and then transferred to another ground, by the Lutheran reformers. Such was the origin of our own national Establishment. Since the age of its foundation, although all reasonable men's minds have come to an opinion abhorrent of intolerance, nothing has been done or said by the Church, as such, to disengage herself from the practical and theoretic errors of her polity in this respect. Parliaments have repealed despotic statutes; but the Church yet stands liable to all the obloquies and suspicions that attach to her history. For aught the nation knows, or can be sure of, the Church (circumstances favouring) would say again what once she said, and do again what once she did. No disadvantage can be more serious than that of lying open to such jealousies. An intolerant sect may indeed be left to the contempt and obscurity it deserves; but a national Church—intolerant, must be

watched, and tied, and humiliated, if not rejected, by a people reasonably alive to their liberties and welfare.

If then the national Church is to be maintained, certain measures are indispensable, which shall place her at a broad distance, as well from the spiritual despotism of the REFORMATION, as from that of the Papacy.

SECTION IX.

PRESENT DISPARAGEMENTS OF THE MINISTERS OF RELIGION.

THE well-being of a community, and by eminence, of a religious community, demands two conditions in relation to those who serve and govern it; namely,—that they should personally be able and worthy, and that, for the discharge of their functions, they should occupy the most advantageous ground possible.

There have been times when the ministers of religion, and even the people, have thought of the latter of these conditions only, and have been almost indifferent concerning the former. No error can be of worse consequence than this. To attribute every thing to the official prerogatives and dignity of the functionary, while we care little or nothing about the intellectual and moral qualities of the man, is the last and lowest illusion of superstition. How frivolous and degraded must the minds of those have become who are accustomed to look at nothing in God's ministers, but their frocks! These absurd notions, we may hope, are nearly obsolete.

But on the other side, it is an error, and it is the characteristic error of modern times, and of Protestantism, so to regard the personal accomplishments and individual worth of the Christian minister, as hardly to inquire, or to care, whether the position in which he stands is such as to give his talents and virtues all the advantage they ought to command. In ages gone by, the great damage of the Church was a general want of worthiness in its ministers: in the present age, its hurt comes from the disparagements under which its able and upright ministers have to labour.

It is true that brilliant qualities of mind, in single instances, or an unconquerable energy, or an eminent degree of faith and holiness, may so surmount every disadvantage, as that it may be thought there were none to be encountered. From such instances a very delusive argument is often drawn, of this sort—"You find fault with our ecclesiastical economy; but look at such and such men, and see how well it works in able hands;—we want nothing but many of the same stamp, and all would be right." No reasoning can be more futile than this. Who shall set forth, in full view, the struggles of these same eminent men with the disadvantages of their position? or who tell us what it has cost themselves, and the Church, to counteract and vanquish those disadvantages? But

this is an incidental and inconsiderable part of the argument; for it is an extreme folly in estimating the influence of systems to take *rare instances* as our rule: we should consider always the mass and the many. Is it asked, what are the merits of a certain polity? ask again, what is its operation upon *ordinary* minds?

The three principal species, or successive developments of spiritual despotism, have passed away; namely, that of the pristine Church, that of the Papacy, and that which supplanted the Romish tyranny at the Reformation. It might indeed be easy to point out particular examples of an analagous kind, here and there around us; but we regard such instances as barely worthy either of formal notice; they are *single instances* only, or they are likely to become every day less and less frequent. The whole tendency of public feeling and opinion, and the current of affairs, sets in the opposite direction. The reaction from spiritual despotism has gone very far; the clerical order is, in many modes, suffering depression, and is in danger of still greater humiliations. The endeavours of every considerate supporter of public religion should therefore be directed toward a contrary point. Instead, then, of hunting out from its corners the poor and scattered remains of sacerdotal pride, we propose succinctly to state the most prominent causes and occasions

of those disadvantages that, at the present moment, depress the ministers of religion.

This might be done within the compass of a page, if it were not so often, that what demands to be named as a serious evil and a humiliation, has come to be regarded by those who suffer from it in a false light, as a valuable prerogative, or as an honour. Explanations therefore are necessary, for the purpose of showing the grounds on which it is alleged that what has been cherished and pertinaciously maintained, ought rather to be abandoned and disclaimed. Of all parties it is more or less true that they cling to their loss, and glory in their discredit.

Whatever there is that must be named as an obstacle, or as a dishonour, affecting the Christian community at large, may properly be pointed to as, in an emphatic sense, a disparagement to the clerical order: and it may be such, partly as the misfortune, and partly as the fault, of the ministers of religion. For example; every private Christian of serious and ingenuous temper, feels, in an oppressive manner, the reproach of the enemies of our faith, who ask, "Why does not Christianity, now that it is freed from external opposition, command the assent of all men, and universally prevail?" A reply may be given to such a taunting question; nevertheless, there remains a certain degree of force in the opprobrious question; and the only

way in which it can be turned aside, so as not to attach to Christianity itself, is for Christians to take it upon themselves, and to say, "It is altogether our fault that the religion of the Bible does not now triumph universally."

If the private Christian should make such a reply to such a reproachful inquiry, it cannot be denied that the ministers of religion must do the same in a special and emphatic manner. That Christianity, in their hands, does not rapidly spread, and does not command the reverence and submission of the mass of mankind, is indeed a humiliation, full of anxiety and discouragement. While the Gospel was struggling with external hostility, and contending for its very existence against power and malice, its ministers acquitted themselves of all blame in bearing a courageous testimony to its truth, and in enduring extreme sufferings for its sake. But their responsibility reaches much further, and is of a more serious sort, when, instead of encountering opposition from the civil powers, or from the world at large, they receive favour and aid, when the field of labour is opened before them, and they are invited to occupy the ground; and when nothing hardly remains to be done or desired, except that which they must themselves effect.

At the present moment, and in this country (if no where else) Christianity stands on open ground, and may exhibit its proper strength.

It has all reason and argument on its side, it has the voice of conscience in the bosoms of men to sustain it: it has no adversary to fear, and no visible obstacle to bar its progress. Under such favouring circumstances, merely to maintain its ground is substantially to suffer defeat. Not to advance with a rapid acceleration, is to incur dishonour and suspicion. This dishonour, then, where falls it?—not on Christianity. After every reasonable palliation has been admitted, there will remain a weighty discredit, which not merely implies some fault on the part of those whose special duty it is to promote religion; but which stands in their way as a disparagement, and as a hindrance; and it is as such that we here name it.

Two or three periods might be referred to in which religion, though much mingled with superstition, affected the mass of society far more extensively, and more intensely too, than it does at present, and when its ministers commanded the homage of all classes—the high as well as the low. In what manner they availed themselves of this submissiveness of the people is another question; but we ought to desire nothing less than that, in an age of good sense and reason, those who wield the powers of Christianity—freed from superstition and fraud, should possess an influence equally extensive, and equally efficient. Christianity should either be oppressed and persecuted, or it should be trium-

phant, and universally honoured: a middle state is, to a religion so sanctioned, an ambiguous state; and while it thus wavers and halts in its course, its official advocates stand in a false position, and one of very peculiar disadvantage. The authority they might wish to exercise for the maintenance of morals, and for the enforcement of church discipline, finds no steady fulcrum in public opinion. The plain rules of virtue, of temperance; justice, truth, charity, take effect indeed upon the docile, but possess no restraining terror in relation to the bold and wilful. The ministers of religion, unhappily, in protestant countries, have learned to expect no submission — except from the *submissive;* and hence, naturally reluctant to draw upon themselves the expressions of contumacy, they avoid that style of asserting morality which would only provoke insults, and fail to produce obedience. The entire method of teaching morals from the pulpit betrays a conscious want of power to carry home these principles in ecclesiastical practice. We hear the letter of Christian morality, but feel scarcely any thing of its energy. There is little tone in our church and chapel ethics: and why, but because the teachers of morals are mere lecturers upon abstract principles: as an order, they are not in authority. The clergy are the instructors of that quiet minority of the community that is pleased to attend public worship; they are not God's ministers to the people at large.

Let this principle be considered as it deserves, That Christianity can display its powers, only when it is persecuted; or when it has become paramount.

Again; the grand opprobrium of our modern and protestant Christianity—that which at once enfeebles and obscures it, and which bars its progress, namely—its factious condition, while it presses upon Christians generally, bears with a peculiar force upon the clerical body. Why do the ministers of religion enjoy so little honour, and exercise so little power?—it is because they are divided among themselves. To a certain extent only, do they sustain one another, and are sustained in common, by the broad meaning of Scripture. To as great an extent they diminish the influence one of another; they stand before the world as the rivals and antagonists one of another; and they make their appeals to the word of God, not only for strengthening their general and salutary power, but for defending their particular position. All this is manifestly incompatible with any high degree of spiritual authority.

Few, if any, seem to have their eyes open to the immensity of this disadvantage. It is the infatuation of the times to be blind to it, or to labour to palliate it. Every age has been insensible of its principal and most glaring fault, and assuredly the present age is no exception to the

rule. Let but the ministers of religion distinctly imagine what would be their honour, what their just and beneficial influence, what their means of pastoral government, what their opportunities for bringing Christianity to bear upon the outcast portions of the community, high and low, and for making it embrace, as it ought, the entire population, were they themselves one in mind and one in communion. Hitherto we have not known what Christianity might effect, because its ministers have never been willing to combine their strength, or to concur in their measures, or to agree in faith and counsel. The force of religious motives is half of it turned in upon the Church, and there evaporates: let but the whole of it flow forth as a river from its springs, and nothing could resist it.

The official disparagement that results from this cause is much aggravated by the use of certain vilifying arguments, resorted to by vulgar and secular minds for the purpose of excusing, or even of recommending, religious divisions. Often does it happen with those who are capitally in fault, that their own apology seals their condemnation. Thus there are some who do not blush to assure us that it is only by motives of rivalry that the ministers of religion can be stimulated to perform their duties with a necessary zeal; or that nothing but division among the clergy can prevent those dangerous combinations

whence hierarchical despotism takes its start; or that, in religion, as well as in common affairs, the public is the gainer by an open market, and competition among venders.

All this grossness would be true, if Christianity were *not* true: and indeed it is true while Christianity is treated and thought of as little better than other systems of national worship: but each of these pretences is impiously false when made to attach to the Christianity of the Scriptures. That is only half believed which is believed as the alternative in a controversy; and at present all our religious convictions are subject to a deduction of this sort. The great principles of the Gospel, thought of as the subjects of discord among the teachers of religion, are not firmly lodged in our minds;—nor in their minds. Conscious of this lowered or shattered confidence, affecting as well the teachers as the taught, the deficiency of genuine assurance is supplied whence it may, and various secondary motives are admitted to give their aid in sustaining our profession, and in buoying up our zeal. But no such unworthy accessories would be needed, or indeed tolerated, if the genuine force of faith itself were not broken down by disputation.

Fully we may grant that those who slenderly believe the great verities of the Gospel may need to be provoked to diligence in their spiritual functions by the rivalries and jealousies of faction;

and certain it is that where high motives languish, the deficiency may be supplied by the personal ambition of those who are striving to outshine competitors. It is also true, while our church polities on the one side are purely democratic, and on the other side are purely hierarchical, that faction among the ministers of religion operates as a preservative against both popular and clerical tyranny. But none of these degrading precautions or secular and vulgar incentives would find place, if once the paramount and elevating motives of Christianity took full effect. It is nothing but faction itself that renders the impulses derived from faction needful. Faction laid aside, and we should no more want the artificial stimulus it may supply. Their divisions among themselves discarded, and the ministers of the Gospel would instantly stand possessed of an authority that would neither ask extrinsic aids, nor need humiliating counteractions. Little can be hoped for in relation to Christianity, until its ministers remove from themselves the dishonour of their feuds.

It ought not perhaps to be deemed proper to look at subjects of this serious sort, even for a moment, in the light of worldly prudence; but if this might be permitted, one must be amazed at that want of discernment of their common credit and interest, as AN ORDER, which allows the ministers of religion so to divide and to subdivide their corporate strength. And never

have such divisions been more inexpedient or dangerous than at the present moment, when the democratic element, throughout the social system, is gaining rapidly upon all powers of government and principles of authority; when legitimate feelings of reverence, along with questionable prejudices, are disappearing; and when SENTIMENT of almost every kind is becoming faint and feeble. At such a time the clerical influence must be regarded as standing exposed to extreme peril: what then is likely to be its fate if it be internally broken by disagreements, and alienated, part from part, by fixed aversions? How are those to defend their common prerogatives who will not recognize each other as claimants of the joint privilege, or even meet under the same roof?

But let these inferior and secular considerations be altogether dismissed. Surely those must have a faint sense of their responsibility who can think themseves free to indulge their resentments, to entertain their prejudices, and to adhere to their bigotry—at the peril of the salvation of mankind. Yet it is the factions, and the jealousy, and the animosities, of the ministers of Christianity, that at the present moment is sealing the perdition of the world. It is this that is condemning the millions of our British population to ignorance and atheism: it is this that is snatching from us the lately entertained hope of the conversion of Moham-

medans and Pagans: it is this that is scattering the sighs and prayers of the Church for the prevalence of truth and goodness: it is this—it is the disgraceful, the groundless, and the obstinate discords of the ministers of religion, that now baffles the benevolence of Heaven, and throws the wretched human family forward upon another cycle of satanic illusion. The methods of the Divine government, inscrutable as they are for the most part, yet make themselves legible, very often, in the terrible retributions they involve. So it may prove in the present instance. Every sort of motive and incidental advantage has, during the current period, combined to invite a reconsideration, and an abandonment of our hereditary religious divisions. This has been the Lord's special call to his ministers of the present age. But it has not been listened to; it has been heard—and contemned. Yet the guilty will go in peace to their graves, and the public punishment be reserved to descend with ruin upon the heads of their less culpable successors. Let it be believed that, in the actual tendency of opinions throughout Europe, and not less so in England, the clerical institute and order is altogether in jeopardy. Weakened a little more, and disgraced a little more by internal discords, and it may be trampled under foot by its adversaries.

At what cost was it that the clergy of the third century promoted superstition and pursued

their selfish ends? or at what cost did those of the fifth and sixth centuries bear down, and put to silence, the few remonstrants who called upon them to return to apostolic simplicity?—it was at the cost to the world of the delusions and corruptions of twelve hundred years. Heaven did not interpose to stop the natural course of evil. The Church was left to go on in the path it had chosen: the clergy enjoyed the fruits of their treason against their Lord: Judas held his thirty pieces of silver, and rioted without remorse in his gains. The treason of our own times is of a different sort; but we know not that it is less pernicious; and assuredly it is aggravated by a more abundant knowledge of right and wrong; nor is there any ground of just confidence that its proper consequences will be averted by extraordinary interpositions of Divine power and mercy.

The part of the junior members of the clerical order (of all communions) is to convince themselves of the error of their fathers in this behalf, and to resolve that, so soon as they come upon the stage of public life, they will remove the unwarrantable and pernicious discords that have so long stayed the course of Christianity, and brought its ministers into contempt. Union, if once cordially intended and promoted, would not be obstructed by any serious obstacles: the difficulties that stand in its way would appear to be what they are, trivial pretexts only,

or misunderstandings which good sense and charity would presently surmount. So far as the present pleas of faction are of a political kind, they must at once be condemned as impiously criminal: so far as they relate to diversities of usage or opinion in worship and government, a better understood principle of church polity and communion, together with that sentiment of love and forbearance which the Gospel supplies and demands, would secure to every man his personal persuasion, without allowing him to break company with his brethren; and so far as our parties take their origin from theological disagreements, a pious and diligent prosecution of biblical interpretation, such as is at present in progress—biblical interpretation opposed to the dialectic and the metaphysic method of compacting systems, would soon bring into substantial accordance all sincere men. In one word, a restored manliness of feeling among religious folks—a renovated good sense, and above all, an invigorated piety and profound conviction of the truth of the religion we profess, would dispel, as in an instant, the shame and folly of our factions.

The above-named heavy disparagements, under which the influence of the ministers of religion is at present labouring, attach in common, and nearly in equal degrees, to the clergy of all parties. There remains however to be mentioned certain causes of depression which

specially affect the ministers of different communions. The most considerable of these have, in the preceding Sections, been cursorily adverted to, but it is proper here distinctly to bring them forward; yet a copious argument on subjects so familiar cannot be necessary; nor does the author intend to take into account certain minute diversities, that distinguish our various denominations.

The Wesleyan Methodists and Moravians excepted, the great body of our English Dissenters have fallen from Presbyterianism to Congregationalism, and in consequence of renovated party feelings, have been led of late to defend that form of government with warmth. At the very same time the evils and impracticability of this system have been so strongly, though silently, felt, as that several important deviations from it have been attempted. In truth, wherever Christianity is in an expanding state, a polity essentially (though not by name) episcopal, takes place; as for example, in missionary stations, and at home too, where a pastor is of episcopal character, and is eminently assiduous and zealous, so as to extend his labours beyond the walls of his chapel. The very pattern of primitive episcopacy might be pointed to in some of our rural districts, where a mother congregational Church has, under the laborious care of its pastor, surrounded itself with dependant chapels, scattered over a district of seven or ten

miles diameter. All that is wanting in such cases is ingenuousness enough not to inveigh against the name—bishop, while episcopacy is actually used.

Again; conscious of the fault of their principle, individuals among the congregational dissenters have laboured, time after time, to establish some sort of organization of the body, for the management of their common interests. But neither ministers nor people, generally, are as yet prepared to yield what is indispensable to the rendering such unions—*unions* indeed, or for making them effective, in any considerable degree. Beside, it is little more than the political well-being of the body that could come under the cognizance of a metropolitan committee; and even in relation to these, wide disagreements prevent the concentration of the will of the body. The very principle of these communities repels organization, and so strong a feeling of jealousy toward every species of *extended* authority pervades them, that no sooner is any scheme advanced which might ripen into an efficient general government, than it draws upon itself universal dislike.

Considered in its relation to the pastors, individually, the congregational system is, in one word—the people's polity, framed or adhered to, for the purpose of circumscribing clerical power within the narrowest possible limits, and of absolutely excluding any exertions of authority, such as the high English temper could

not brook. The minister of the meeting-house or chapel is—one against all. His neighbouring brethren may listen in sympathy to his complaints, but they can seldom yield him succour: to attempt to interfere might be to dislodge him at once from his position. No adjustment of ecclesiastical powers can leave a smaller balance in the hands of the pastor.

The instances that would probably be pointed to in proof that these averments are only theoretically true, and not practically so, we should single out as really confirmatory of them. It is a universal principle that, to abridge excessively the powers of a ruler, is to place him under a sort of necessity to become a despot. Feeling that the prerogatives formally assigned to him are altogether insufficient for the free and beneficial discharge of his functions, no alternative is left to him, but either to succumb, and to sustain a mere mockery of authority, or to usurp (we must call it usurpation) such powers as he can; and by personal address, or by the force of his temper, or the momentum of his talents and character, to render himself absolute. Nothing tends so rapidly to despotism as pure democracy. The cases, be they as many as they may, in which congregational ministers exercise a real and unrestrained power, concur along with the frequent cases of an opposite sort, in which the minister is the creature of the people, and both support the general assertion that, to insulate

congregations, and to leave a single stipendiary teacher *alone*, to manage as he can, the popular will, is a system that must almost always end, either in compromising the liberties of the people, or in annihilating the independence, the salutary power, and the personal comfort, of the minister.

High-minded and faithful men (we use the terms in the best sense) and there are many such among the Congregational Dissenters, may be prompted to deny with indignation the allegation of their infelicitous position. Such should however, as well in justice to themselves, as to their own and other bodies, consider, not so much their particular and exclusive case, but rather that of the many among their brethren, less energetic in temperament, less skilled in the arts of government, and less advantaged by talents, or perhaps by property, than themselves. And another, and a more recondite inquiry should also be made, concerning the secret, silent, and universal operation of the popular will, through a course of time, over theological systems, and over moral principles and sentiments, as taught from the pulpit, and as carried into effect upon the people. Men are not always conscious of how far they have been carried from their supposed longitude, by a tranquil current, into the course of which they have steered.

The eagerness of congregational ministers in

defending a system so disparaging to themselves, and so incompatible with the dignity, security, and serenity, proper to their office, may seem a riddle to by-standers: it is however susceptible of some explication. The events of the time have thrown all parties upon a partisan-like assertion of their peculiarities; and it has been felt that any show of misgiving or doubt, as to sectarian principles, would be caught at and unfairly used by opponents. Besides, it is well understood that the dissenting laity, generally, are as far as possible from being in a mood to relinquish any portion of their acquired sovereignty, and would abandon the most distinguished of their preachers who should openly controvert popular doctrines. Nor ought we to leave out of the account the unfeigned convictions of many, perhaps of most, of these respectable men, who have persuaded themselves, or have been persuaded, that their polity is essentially the same as that of the apostolic churches.* Having had the baronial prelacy of the middle ages to contend with, and having fallen into the almost universal error of fighting for and against NAMES, they have believed themselves to occupy an impregnable position, because they have seen their opponents standing in one that is indefensible. It has been the misfortune moreover of the dissenting clergy, to

* See Appendix.

derive their knowledge on ecclesiastical questions much more from our English reformation-writers, and from their own puritan and nonconformist divines, than from original sources. Very few of them, and manifestly not those who at present figure in ecclesiastical polemics, are familiarly conversant with the Greek and Latin Church writers. The diffusion among them of this sort of learning (proper as it is to a divine) would infallibly lead to some considerable modifications of opinion. Unhappily, at present, the prejudice prevails which prevents its being seen that ancient books perhaps intrinsically undeserving of perusal, may nevertheless claim attention, in a peremptory manner, as the sources and materials of history. Uninformed of the history of Christianity, we are the creatures of that recension of Christianity which happens to be current in our times.

It is always extremely difficult to state the defects of religious systems without conveying, to those who are uninformed in such matters, an injurious or an exaggerated impression of facts. The author, in this instance, formally cautions the general reader against the misinterpretations or extensions to which his averments may be open. He would commit his pages to the flames, much rather than seem to associate himself with the virulent calumniators of the Dissenters. He well knows the Dissenters;—he knows that Christianity is among them in an

efficacious form; he knows their zeal, their abundant labours for the promotion of the Gospel, their disinterestedness, their liberality (unmatched and unlimited) and their private and personal worth and piety; and although they may scout his praise, he will still praise them. But their opposition to the Established Church has deeply injured them;—it has set them wrong, very far, in polity and principles; it has infected them, in no small degree, with a politico-religious fanaticism; and especially it has fixed them, almost universally, in a blind confidence of being, on all points, "in the right," a confidence which precludes a modest and wise consideration of principles, and leaves scarcely a hope of their entertaining those serious and momentous inquiries concerning the general condition of our modern Christianity, which are now called for.

But we must not pass on without noting, and fully admitting, that material alleviation of the evils of congregationalism which has incidentally resulted from the modern missionary exertions of the several dissident communions. The various evangelic schemes and labours which have been on foot the last forty years, and especially the last twenty years, have in fact operated to give the dissenting clergy a corporate existence, and to secure for them, in relation to their congregations, strength and importance, both individually, and as AN ORDER. The great

movements to which Christian zeal has given rise, place the ministers before their flocks in a position of disinterested exertion, and self-denying labour, such as stimulates affection, and secures respect; in a word, augments their proper influence. These enterprises, moreover, involve measures, private and public, which induce habits of business and government, habits applicable to other purposes, and highly important to the pastoral character. Again (nor is this of least account) our modern evangelic societies bring the pastors into frequent consultation among themselves, or in conjunction with the most respectable of the laity. In some degree, therefore, congregationalism is congregationalism no longer. Ministers are now a body; they work in with extensive organizations; they are members of broad systems of government; they go and come from their spheres of labour with hearts relieved of the pressure of private cares, by the excitement of public cares. They are not, as once they were, the spirit-broken and deplorable anchorets of the study and the pulpit. They are of more importance at home, and of more importance abroad, than were their predecessors. They have made proof, in a signal and peculiar manner, of the truth of the axiom—that "Mercy is twice blessed." The missionary spirit, and its practices and movements, have redeemed congregational dissent from decay or extinction; and

have brought to bear upon it a corrective, so efficacious, as almost to hide its capital faults. In the beneficial change that has thus taken place, the congregational laity have not indeed relinquished any power; but their clergy, from a foreign source, have acquired power; and so the balance is a little righted.

Nevertheless, this incidental remedy falls very short of those measures that are requisite for placing dissenting ministers in the position which the ministers of religion ought always to occupy, and in which the personal merits and accomplishments of many of them would well fit them to stand. The same men, organized under an episcopal system (wisely balanced and invigorated by lay influence) and set free from immemediate dependance upon single congregations, and upon individuals, would soon draw to themselves the mass of the population. Did but the several denominations of orthodox Dissenters understand their interests well enough to dismiss their internal disagreements—to renounce congregationalism, the meeting-house economy, in principle and in fact—and to organize themselves throughout the country, not indeed by the medium of precarious and powerless committees, but under a firm and vigorous ecclesiastical polity—it might then be superfluous to talk about the reform of the Established Church; for the Established Church must soon give way before a phalanx of this sort, even if

left in possession of all her endowments. But this will not happen: dissent is not likely soon to be otherwise than discordant and chaotic. Our part therefore must be, while careful not to trench in any manner upon the rights of the sects, to look to the Episcopal Church, and to strive, by all calm and reasonable means, to redress its most urgent faults, and to secure for it permanency, and the means of gradual amendment and extension.

John Wesley's Church-of-Englandism, and his respect for episcopal orders, involved, incidentally, his admirable system in an embarrassment which now threatens the integrity of the whole, and is actually dividing it. Compelled, in the prosecution of his great objects, to break away from the reach of the crosier, he nevertheless refused to consider his irregular preachers as *clergy*: this dignity belonged only to himself, and the few of his companions who had received a university education, and episcopal ordination. His legislative and administrative assembly therefore—the Conference—was, in his view, a mixed convocation of clergy and laity;—the latter being predominant in numbers. But this arbitrary and artificial distinction—a mere canonical fiction, necessarily grew fainter and fainter every year; and soon completely disappeared. Yet the silent change was of vital consequence; for thenceforward the society fell

into the despotic form of a purely hierarchical polity. The preachers—the *clergy*, no longer pretending to call themselves laymen, managed affairs, apart from, and to the exclusion of the people. This might last while the personal authority of several of the venerated colleagues of the founder was at hand to check resistance; but the removal of these respected men was the signal of rebellion. In the temper of the present times, an unmixed and irresponsible hierarchy will not be endured. The Wesleyan leaders should long ago have discerned the growing danger, and have prevented the schisms that have actually happened, by rendering Conference what Wesley intended it to be—a convocation of clergy and laity. Disinterested spectators cannot but grieve to see a system, so excellent originally, and which has effected so much good, breaking up, and generating feud upon feud—scandal upon scandal, the consequence of which must be a loss of genuine influence over the people, and a lowering of the ministerial character in that communion. Shall the Established Church, with a noble and a Christian-like concession to the circumstances of the times, embrace Wesleyan Methodism, leaving to it its vitality and its independence; and so, while it loses a formidable opponent, gain an efficient ally?

We do not then find any where, among the

dissenting communities, a system susceptible of universality, or much deserving to be thought of as likely to supersede the Episcopal Church. Each of them is attached to certain prejudices—called "great principles," which keep them sectarian in practice and feeling. Private liberty and personal preferences are too often set above considerations of public utility: the necessity of concession, of compromise, and of submission to authority, is not admitted: especially the Christian duty and solemn obligation of preserving union, is but faintly seen. The sin of schism stands indeed in the catalogue of vices, for the Apostles have placed it there; but an instance hardly ever occurs in which the guilt of schism is allowed to be imputed to separatists. Any reason is deemed reason enough for splitting a society, and for founding a rival Church under the eaves of the mother Chapel. Congregationalism puts forth its shoots with a too ready exuberance; and our country towns, in very many instances, present, what we are required to believe, is the apostolic spectacle of Christian societies, within gun-shot of each other, and differing in nothing but their grudges, yet preserving little or no fellowship. Bodies acting upon principles of this sort have to learn the rudiments of Christian order. The Established Church is deformed indeed by many blemishes,

and urgently needs revision; yet it *may* become the national form of Christianity.

This is not the place for treating of Church Reform: what belongs to the completion of our present argument is briefly and plainly to state those special disparagements under which the clergy of the Established Church are now labouring.

We have already adverted to that fatal surrender of its spiritual prerogatives and independence, to the COURT, which the protestant clergy made in their season of need. Most of the disparagements we should here name are the consequences of that false step—might we call it treason? Combined with the principle and the practices of lay spoliation, and the shameless abuses that have grown out of the custom of patronage, the subjugation of the Episcopal Church to secular control presses upon every clergyman with a weight that exceedingly diminishes the influence his personal merits would command.

The people will not, do not, see it; nay, the clergy themselves do not always or generally feel it, that the English episcopal clergy are under the foot of lay despotism, and are the victims of aristocratic rapacity. But in the popular eye the clergy bear the opprobrium of these usurpations. Acquiescing in them, and immediately benefited, in single instances, by the exercise of these

encroachments, they are regarded as the prime parties in the wrong, which, in reality, is beneficial, not to the clergy at large, but to secular men in office, and to the aristocracy.

Nothing proper to a church-and-state system demands the subserviency of the Church to the State; much less an obsequious dependence of the former, from day to day, upon the ever changing personages of the administration. Would the Church *lose* power, or *gain* it, by resenting this humiliation? Unquestionably gain power; and not merely gain it for the episcopal order, but for every incumbent and curate, in his private sphere, throughout the land. The people would at once see their ministers in a new light; and if, at the same time, the glaring abuses of patronage were corrected, and the whole system brought under the operation of a gradual amendment, such as should concede something to the people, and absolutely exclude the merchandize of souls—the people would yield to their ministers a cordial reverence and submission, at present hardly granted to the most eminent personal worth.

Much that is felt and thought by the people, in relation to their ministers, is never uttered, or is not uttered by the discreet and moderate, whose opinions deserve respect: and of that which is uttered, a very small portion at any time reaches the ears of the parties concerned. If the heavily beneficed pluralist—we will sup-

pose him mainly well-intentioned and respectable (in a low sense of the terms) could but, as he makes his way, on a Sunday morning, to the desk, penetrate the bosoms of his flock, and read the involuntary thoughts, not of the profligate and impudent, nor of the illiberal and vulgar, but of the intelligent and right-minded of his parishioners, he would hide his face in his sleeve, or shrink out of view, never again to meet the glance of his silent reprovers. While certain passages of Scripture are on the lips of the minister, how pungent a feeling of his inconsistency pervades all minds! Even children, if acquainted with facts, are alive to the enormity of the offence of him who, calling himself Christ's servant, and professing to deny himself daily, and to take up his cross, and solemnly renouncing the love of this world, and the eagerness of gain, nevertheless loads himself, to suffocation, with unearned church emoluments; and trails after him, as he goes, a long purse, crammed with the price of souls.

A minister of the Gospel can labour under no disadvantage heavier than that of an imputation of being mainly impelled by motives of cupidity and worldly ambition. This disgrace would be fatal to the influence of the highest talents, and the most laborious zeal: how fatal then is it to the influence of those who do not belie it by any zeal, or any spontaneous labours! But the incalculable injury occasioned by such instances

of sacrilegious selfishness, is by no means confined to the single cases in which it actually appears: if it were so, we might bear with some patience the particular wrong; but in truth, these flagrant examples (too numerous alas) affect the popular mind toward the Church at large, and weigh against the clergy in mass. The clergy—at least the beneficed portion of them, whether or not they be sharers in the guilty emoluments, are sure to have their part in the shame and obloquy thence arising. They are supposed to acquiesce in these enormities; they are known to associate with their culprit brethren; and they are thought to be themselves ready to accept a portion of these flagitious gains. Who shall calculate the amount of that deduction from the general salutary influence of the Established Clergy which is constantly to be set off on the score of these abuses?

Let interested casuists spend their last grain of wit in excusing pluralities—the sale of advowsons—episcopal translations, and those ecclesiastical customs, of every sort, which have one simple motive—the love of money;—let these apologies be carried a little further; it can be only a little—for the common sense and strong feeling of the nation already condemns them: Heaven will declare itself in anger against them; and their abettors will sink confounded in perpetual shame.

The actual constitution of society, the natural

diversity of talents and accomplishments, as well as the differences of official rank, properly involved in a church polity, render unavoidable (nor should we think it abstractedly an evil) some considerable inequalities of dignity and emolument among clerical persons. But there must be a limit at both extremities of the scale of ecclesiastical rank: reason, and the spirit and rules of the Gospel, demand it. All ministers of Christ are, spiritually, on a footing; and they must never so stand relatively one to the other, as to render the cordial fellowship of brethren impracticable, or *undesired,* as well by the depressed as by the elevated members of the order. If alive to her honour and interests, the Church would take prompt means for rescuing any of her ministers from the cruel privations and humiliating embarrassments of absolute poverty. The Church is even more disgraced by the penury of many of her worthiest ministers—her poor curates, than she is by the excessive wealth of some of her dignitaries.

In a country so opulent as this, no minister of religion should be suffered to want a modest competence. This, when it happens among the Dissenters, arises partly from the real inability of the people, in particular stations, to raise the requisite funds; and partly from the want of a better contrived system of collection and distribution. The aggregate wealth of the Dissenters, properly taxed, and equitably shared, would afford

respectable maintenance to all their ministers. But the poverty of the curates of the Established Church is the sheer sin and shame of the wealthy clergy; and as it *might* readily be relieved, so ought it to be relieved, by the strong hand of the law. This obviously is an instance to which the beneficial energy of a church-and-state system should be made to apply.

The diffusion of Christianity, in this country, and its hold of the mass of the people, may perhaps be obstructed by some recondite causes, hitherto not regarded, or suspected. May these soon (if there are such) be discovered and removed! Meantime, are we not solemnly bound to apply ourselves, with a religious assiduity, and in good faith, to the removing of hindrances upon which no obscurity rests, and concerning which it cannot for a moment be doubted that they are sustained by secondary and immoral motives? Do we indeed desire to see Christianity triumph? let then its ministers be placed in a position to promote it without impediment. The Romish clergy commanded great advantages; but they wrought a corrupt system. The protestant clergy have in their hands a far purer doctrine; but they are themselves borne upon by various and heavy disparagements. We possess the "sword of the Spirit;" but the hilt has fallen from the blade, and the heavenly weapon is of little efficacy in our hands.

Our various evangelizing societies declare our zeal, and this zeal is unquestionably sincere, as well as liberal; but it wants consistency;—it wants REASON and CONSCIENCE. We are prompt to save heathens; but will not listen with humility or patience to the rehearsal of our own faults. Christianity, we know, can be promoted with effect, only by those who themselves are governed by its motives, who, in a word, fear God, and hate contention and covetousness, and who meekly consider their own ways, and turn their feet into the path of truth. This, then, should be the beginning of missionary enterprises. The reform of our domestic Christianity is the work we are bound to set about when we would convert the world.

SECTION X.

GENERAL INFERENCES.

GENUINE piety has existed under almost the worst forms of Christianity;—such is the divine efficacy of truth, that its vivifying power is hardly to be destroyed by superincumbent errors. But Christianity does not spread, except in its purest state, and under the most favourable conditions. The first of these facts we are apt to lose sight of when employed in reviewing the religious corruptions that have prevailed in different eras. The characters and the sentiments which occupy the attention while making researches of this sort, produce upon the mind, unless we carefully and constantly guard against it, a melancholy impression, and a false one too, as if virtue and goodness had, at certain times, entirely forsaken the earth; the contrary might be proved concerning even the darkest ages, by abundant evidence. The particular course of inquiry pursued by the author, especially demands a caution on this head: he would not be always repeating this

necessary hint; but yet would wish his readers never to forget it.

This same principle—the existence of genuine piety amid serious errors, is forgotten, or rather rejected, by certain illiberal minds—the bigots of exclusive ecclesiastical hypotheses, who, in maintaining, that, "out of the Church there can be no salvation," would have us understand that there is none out of their own, or apart from that *jure divino* polity to which they adhere. This has been the ground taken in every age by the Romish Church, and hence she has drawn the reasons of her intolerance. But the same stern theoretic pride has passed into our protestant communions, and, strange to say, is maintained, sometimes openly, and often indidirectly and insidiously, by stanch Churchmen, in this enlightened age. "Episcopacy is a divine institution:—the whole efficacy of the Gospel, and the saving virtue of its sacraments, has been formally attached to this institution; those therefore who reject it, reject the conditions of salvation; and we dare not tell them they can be saved." In plain words, all separatists from the Episcopal Church, whatever piety they may seem to possess, are destined to perdition.

Vulgar and malignant spirits, it is true, must have their food; and if we rend from them one venomous superstition, they will seek and soon find another. Reason is not to be addressed to

beings of this order; but there are minds of a middle sort, which get entangled in the same sophisms, and yet are capable of entertaining more charitable views; and perhaps would gladly do so. At the present time, if we pass through the rural, remote, and less enlightened districts of the country, we shall hear not a little of this pernicious bigotry, rung in the ears, Sunday after Sunday, of clownish farmers and peasants, much to their hurt, and immensely to the injury of the Established Church, by men in many senses respectable. In cities and large towns it is very little understood to how great an extent the Church, throughout the country, is putting the whole of her credit and future influence in jeopardy, by the inconsiderate and ill-timed arrogance of some of her clergy. As a means of frightening the common people from the meeting-house, it proves almost entirely unavailing, wherever dissent actually gets a footing; for the people quickly learn to treat with the contempt it deserves so insufferable a want of charity. Episcopal charges, whatever topics they omit, ought to contain pointed cautions against this mischievous illiberality.

Let those who entertain this high church intolerance, consider that, in the actual application which they must make of it, the most serious danger imaginable is incurred, and the greatest possible violence is done to the dictates of good sense, and to the genuine impulses of

Christian love. It is no trivial offence, we may be sure, and no slight peril, to miscall God's work, and Satan's. This was, in substance, the very sin of the Pharisees, which our Lord branded with the mark of unpardonable blasphemy. The bold bigotry that does not hesitate to assign millions of Christ's humble disciples to perdition, makes the pillars of heaven tremble. Better had it been for the man who dares to do so, that a millstone should have been hung around his neck, and he cast into the sea.

We say, let such arrogant Churchmen consider the violence they do to common sense, as well as to every genuine sentiment. There are certain affirmations which, though wholly destitute of evidence, *may* yet be accepted as true, without surrendering reason; but there are others that are to be entertained only so long as we can force upon ourselves a sort of temporary insanity. For illustration, let us suppose ourselves standing in front of a temple or palace; and that we are assured by one who professes a more than human knowledge of the invisible constitution of things, that each of the columns of the portico, though apparently nothing more than marble, and though cold and hard to the touch, is actually informed with animal and rational life; that it sees, hears, feels, and thinks, like ourselves; and, in a word, is very man, while to the eye, a pillar, and to the touch, a stone. This, we say, marvellous as it is, *may*

be believed; all we want is a reason for giving so much credit to our informant. But now, let this same person, emboldened by our simplicity, in the first instance, go on still further to try our powers of faith, and to affirm that those whom we take to be men and women, ascending the steps, and entering the building, and whom we fancy to hear conversing one with another, and with whom we ourselves have just before conversed, are not, as they seem, human beings, are not living, are not rational; but are mere stones or statues, and might, without consciousness of pain, or effusion of blood, be shivered by the chisel and mallet.

At this point, surely, the most credulous must stop, leaving the mad only to believe. But now this example has a real analogy with the insensate intolerance of those who, after conversing with Christian men, and beholding their good works and consistency, and after being compelled to admit that they bear all the *semblances* of piety, will yet call them children of the devil, and heirs of perdition, because, forsooth, they are out of the pale of episcopacy! Transubstantiation is a credible dogma; but this enormity insults reason quite as much as it does despite to pious benevolence, and actually breaks down the mind that submits to it. What can a man be worth, either in reason or in feeling, after he has thus been trodden in the dust, and made sport of by bigotry so preposterous? It might

indeed seem altogether frivolous to advert seriously to extravagances of this sort, if it were not very true that they pervade the Church, and, under different forms and pretexts, infect the clerical order to a degree that involves the Establishment in an extreme danger. Church Reform may help us, but the Church must look well to herself, and purge out thoroughly the old leaven of popish intolerance, or no reform will save her. Let the common people, throughout the country, hear Methodists and Dissenters spoken of from the pulpit, frequently and freely, as Christian brethren: not a hat the less would be doffed in the porch on a Sunday: on the contrary, so much frank truth and charity, uttered by the clergy, would immensely benefit the Church at the present crisis. Whatever may be the faults or errors of the Separatists, they themselves, very many of them, are Christians, and as good Christians as Churchmen; and to deny this, or to be reluctant to confess it, is not to injure them, but ourselves: nay, it is an impudent impiety, such as a wise and good man must shudder to think of, and will never patiently bear.

A parallel instance of the revolting uncharitableness that results from a rigid adherence to an ecclesiastical hypothesis, presents itself among the sects: in truth, the entire range of church history, whether ancient or modern, does not furnish a more surprising example of the force of perverted religious notions in

holding men (often kind-hearted men) to a position where they can do nothing else but set at naught every Christian feeling, as well as common sense. A safe method of trying the validity of any general principle is to carry it out to its utmost extent, and then to see to what it leads us. For example, we might readily judge, in this manner, of the principle which impels a small party of Christians, by no means outshining their brethren in solid Christian virtues, or in amiable and heavenly dispositions, to shut themselves up in their little munition of spiritual pride—a city walled up to heaven, and there to unchristianize, or at least to unchurch, all Christendom. This sort of ultra sectarism renders itself absolutely ridiculous, in the refinements to which it is carried; for not only will not these good souls eat of the Lord's loaf in company with the unclean and unimmersed commonalty of professed Christians; but not even with such of the immersed as may have contracted defilement, at any time, by eating with the unimmersed! nay, they will not eat with any one who does not bring with him a clean bill of health, as having never, in the act of communion, come near the sprinkled! Instead of arguing, as St. Peter does, that it is irreligious to call any man unclean whom God has cleansed, by his grace and the knowledge of his truth, these immaculate anchorets find that, to treat the mass of Christians as

Christians, would be to break up their own ecclesiastical theory; in a word, they could not do so, without surrendering the first principle of their polity. Herein they stand precisely on the ground taken by the Church of Rome, and by high Church-of-Englandmen; for many of the pious and amiable members of these communions, when their better nature was upon them, have sighed to embrace their heretical protestant brethren, and to call Christians, Christians: but how could it be done? not at all, without excluding themselves from their Church, and ranging with heresy and schism.

Few are more to be pitied than are those whose consciences have become ensnared by mischievous absurdities of this order. The infatuation scarcely admits a cure: there is a certain degree of violence which, if it be once undergone by the moral and rational faculties, destroys (may we so speak?) the intellectual organization: the mind no more works according to its natural mechanism; it still lives and heaves; but is not spontaneous. The first impulse of Christian feelings is to treat these instances of ecclesiastical lunacy with silent pity; and so assuredly we should do, if it were not that errors so disgraceful to Christianity, are perpetuated, and obtruded upon the world, and are made in some sense important, by the misplaced indulgence shown them by men of sense. Apart from this sort of countenance

and support, direct or indirect, the "strict communion" sect must long ago have ceased to be the opprobrium of the respectable body in the bosom of which it takes shelter. But that body, in its opposition to certain superstitions of the age of Cyprian, has rendered its testimony nugatory by the wild intolerance of its ecclesiastical theory. The doctrine of the liberal party among the Baptists, is a *happy practical inconsistency*, which still leaves their theory uncorrected.

But at what cost is indulgence shown to the shameless bigotry of zealots? at the cost of the honour of Christianity—at the cost of the perdition of thousands around us. While Christianity is made odious and ridiculous by some, and while others encourage those who do so, both parties wonder that their preaching and teaching, and the distribution of the Scriptures, produce little effect upon the mass of mankind. The mass of mankind, let us be assured, are gifted with common sense; they would indeed listen to the Gospel, and ever have listened to it, when presented to them in its genuine dignity; but they will not be induced to kiss the dust before monstrous superstitions, and absurd intolerance.

This most momentous principle Christians very imperfectly discern, that, although piety will exist under almost any pressure of errors and follies, CHRISTIANITY ITSELF WILL NEVER SPREAD

while so encumbered. The modern missionary zeal is a strenuous endeavour on the part of the spiritual Church—an endeavour thoroughly sincere in its primary motive, and in its substance altogether commendable, to contravene this principle, and to carry the Gospel out, bearing all the weight which the prejudices of ages have heaped upon it. Our various sectarian missionary societies are now wrestling with Omnipotence on this very point. The experiment is being tried whether the nations at large may be converted by the unamended and discordant Christianity which we inherit from the Lutheran Reformers.

In the privacy of Christian circles, there are multitudes who, with the utmost intensity of feeling, and with a zeal that, in Scripture phrase, "eateth them up," desire the conversion of Popish, Pagan, and Mohammedan nations, as well as that of their irreligious countrymen.—Multitudes, we say, who, with alacrity, would do any thing, and surrender any thing, the doing or the sacrifice of which might promote the religious welfare of mankind: genuine philanthropists, counting all things as dross for Christ. But these simple-minded persons act only as they are led, informed, and reined in, by men more politic and cautious than themselves; by men, honest, indeed, in their endeavours to spread Christianity; but too cool and keen-sighted to pursue this great object at

whatever cost. They love the Gospel unfeignedly, but love it under a condition. The form of things in which they have been trained, and which, as a point of professional honour, they are pledged to uphold, and especially in this present season of unsettled counterpoise of parties, must be silently, yet effectually, taken care of. 'Let the Gospel spread—no damage being done to us or our polity.'

The very same half-hidden feeling, on the part of the foremost men of the Church, we may find examples of in every age. And it has been this feeling, and this occult discretion, that have again and again turned off the current that might have watered the nations, and made the wilderness to blossom as the rose.

Allowance made for the mere tenacity of habits and tastes, the feeling that has so fatally affected the minds of ecclesiastical leaders, in every age, and which now, on all hands, impedes improvement, and obstructs the progress of Christianity, is this—that certain necessary reforms would derogate from the honours, or invade the interests, of the clerical order. Such a fear may, indeed, have been no illusion when vast powers and wealth were in the keeping of the Church; but, in our own times, the position of the ministers of religion, in every communion, is on the opposite side, and Church Reform (we now apply the phrase, without distinction, to *all* denominations—for all need it

alike) involves, not the reduction, but the re-instatement of the clerical order; not its diminution, but its enlargement, its advancement, its honour, its just power, and its independence of popular contumacy, and of lay rapacity. The natural reluctance, therefore, which, in the instance of all corporations, civil and sacred, resists amendment, is, at the present time, misjudging and impolitic. If we look at religious communities separately, or at the Protestant Church at large, it is true that every considerable alteration we might wish to see effected would involve an augmentation of comfort and of credit to the ministers of religion.

The fact cannot escape an intelligent spectator of the present critical struggle of religious parties, that the crown of preeminence hangs at the goal, ready to be carried off by that party, be it which it may, that, with a manly ingenuousness, an honest zeal, and a Christian conscientiousness, shall undertake ITS OWN REFORM, its reform in theology, in modes of worship, and in polity. There would be little hazard in saying that this prize might now be won even by the least considerable of our various denominations which should resolutely strive for it, and which, while its several competitors are absurdly commending their peculiar notions and usages, and assailing those of others, should unsparingly examine its own, and apply boldly

the remedies which good sense and scriptural principles suggest. A religious body thus acting, would quickly outstrip its rivals, would command the respect of the people at large, would draw to itself men of sense and talent from all parties, and soon would imbibe all, and embrace all.

If conjectures were admitted as to the party most likely (if any be so) now to awaken itself to this honourable ambition—the ambition of leading the way in a return to reason and genuine Christianity, it would be necessary to exclude those who distinguish themselves by a loudly uttered confidence of being in the right, and of needing no reform. This, we cannot deny, seems to be too much the temper of the several dissenting bodies. It has so long been their part to protest against certain glaring faults in the national Church, that it has grown upon them to think their neighbours utterly wrong, and themselves, in the same proportion, faultless. None so blind to their own defects, as the habitual reprovers of others. It has become a sort of adage, among the Dissenters—'no acts of parliament prevent our reforming ourselves, if reform were needed.' This consciousness of liberty has silently generated the persuasion that a reform, which might at any time have been effected, has never been really needed. But those who so reason forget that acts of parliament are much more pliable things than

old prejudices; and that it is, at any time, easier to obtain either the rescinding of statutes, or the enactment of statutes, than to dissipate vulgar errors, to dissolve theological theories, or to recover from the popular grasp the lost and just prerogatives of authority.

Meantime, it is certain that a modest and hopeful consciousness of the necessity of various revisions and reforms is entertained by the intelligent members of the Established Church. The course of events tends in the same direction, and must speedily place the national hierarchy on a path where it will be much more safe to advance spontaneously and courageously, than to stand, or to be driven forward. Every thing disastrous may be feared if the Church—we mean here the clergy, will yield to nothing but to impulses they cannot resist. Every thing happy might be hoped for, if they would anticipate and direct the changes that are to take place.

Three questions of practical significance meet us in connexion with this momentous subject: the first is—Can the Church, with safety, be touched at all in the way of reform?—the second is this, Is the present position of the Church such, that the clergy have much to lose, and little to hope for, from the changes that are likely to be effected, or the reverse?—and the third, Shall these changes, if indeed they are to be effected, be thrown upon the discretion of the laity, or be guided and governed by the

ministers of religion, ingenuously giving their hearts and talents to the work?

Now we must consider the first of these questions as altogether superseded by the advance of public opinion, and by the avowed opinion and intention of public men of different parties. It is, we say, superfluous to discuss the problem of Church Reform, upon this preliminary ground. The Church *will* be touched —whether it be safe and wise to do so or not. It would be well, indeed, if the forlorn hope of resisting reform could now be abandoned by those who, in clinging to this poor chance, forfeit irretrievably their own influence over the coming changes.

On the second of the above named questions, it seems that much illusion—an illusion natural to the timid, prevails. The great and gradually induced disparagements under which the protestant clergy of all communions are suffering, are not duly considered, or it would be seen that a new adjustment of clerical influence, effected in a country where religion has so strong a hold upon the people, and where what is fair and just is sure, at length, to recommend itself, is likely, not to depress, but to elevate, the order. So far as mere secular interests are concerned, the opinion and feeling of the sound part of the English people has been very distinctly expressed to this effect—that the aggregate income of the Church is not excessive, that

it shall not be invaded; and that it wants nothing but a more beneficial and equitable system of distribution. Then again, the peculiar and critical position of the Established Church, in relation to the separatists, must be very obscurely perceived by her clergy, or it would be forcibly felt that the moments ought not to be lost in which it is yet possible for them to take the lead, to regain preeminence, and to occupy the only ground that can be safe to a national Church. If the Church does not quickly draw toward herself the faltering hearts of the people, and if she does not hold out to the country cheering expectations, some one of the dissenting bodies—or perhaps all combined, will seize the advantage, step in, and teach the Established Church—too late, a lesson she does not dream of. Separation having reached the bold height at which now it stands, it would be an unutterable imprudence, on the part of the clergy, to show to the nation a sullen frown, or to bid public opinion defiance. Most true it is that Reform, carried by force, and in resentment against clerical obduracy, would leave to the clergy a miserable prospect of progressive humiliations.

But the answer that is to be given to our second question turns upon the reply that must be made to the third—namely, who shall guide and govern Church Reform? or who are to be the architects and the workmen in restoring the

ecclesiastical edifice? The clergy themselves must furnish us with a solution of this problem. There is not a doubt that, if men of their own body, wise, accomplished, and pious, and masters of public esteem, were to stand forward, and to challenge the work as their own, and were to give some early and unquestionable evidence, as well of their sincerity, as of their skill—there is, we say, no doubt, that room would instantly be made for them, deference shown them, and a field left to them as clear and as ample as they could desire. What is the alternative?—that Church Reform should be concerted by secular men, and carried forward, as it may, amid the distractions, and liable to the interested motives, that attend political measures. Such a reform may perhaps be beneficial to the country; but rather in a civil, than a religious sense, and whatever useful provisions it may contain, it must, on the whole, tend to seal anew that degradation of the hierarchy, as the creature of the State, which, in protestant countries has already gone much too far. It is this very humiliation which the clergy should promptly prevent; and it can be prevented in one manner only, that is to say, by themselves leading Reform.—With the clergy it now rests to save their order, and our EPISCOPAL, LITURGICAL, and ENDOWED CHURCH.

Whether it shall please God to connect the

preservation and extension of Christianity in this country, and at large, with the re-establishment of our National Church, is what none ought to affirm with that confidence which has been too common with Churchmen; and it is what, assuredly, none should think themselves at liberty to deny. The purposes and intentions of Heaven do not come within the range of our calculations; but happily the course of duty is not at all overshadowed by the cloud that rests upon the ways of the Divine Providence; or it is so overshadowed only by our own fault, when we allow presumptuous anticipations of what we fondly think God will certainly do, or ought to do, to regulate our conduct, in the stead of the plain principles of rectitude and prudence.

Adhering religiously and modestly to unquestionable maxims of good sense and of Christian integrity, we can hardly be in doubt as to the course to be pursued on the present momentous occasion. Men free from factious motives will not for a moment entertain the thought of demolishing, or of suffering to be demolished, our ecclesiastical institutions, on the ground of any mere hypothesis of church polity. These institutions must be fairly tried, and tried for a length of time, freed from abuses and perversions, before we can listen to the averment of theorists—that they are essentially pernicious.

On the other side, we hold it as certain, that none but the most infirm, or the most selfish

and corrupt, will plead for stopping the course of all reform. With such, if there be such, we have nothing to do. On the question, how far shall reform proceed? we again find relief from pressing perplexities in the safe rule of following the track of universal public feeling. What all men exclaim against as flagitious, inequitable, and unchristian, ought to be removed—for that reason alone. Can a Church be efficient, or prosperous, which is condemned and contemned, in many of her practices, by the mass of the people?

Again, in regard to the revision of the forms, articles, and worship of the Church, an adherence to acknowledged rules of discretion might carry us clear of difficulties. The question is not—Whether *this* system of theology, or *that*, condemns or approves certain ambiguous phrases? but it is this—Have certain phrases been, from age to age, an occasion of contention among all, and of offence and distress to pious and humble spirits?—If so, remove them without a scruple. Nor can it be difficult to fix the finger upon such obnoxious terms. Let none be expunged but such as have actually become notorious as the text of controversy. We do not, in these instances, listen to captious and frivolous objections; but to the testimony of history;—a testimony liable to no uncertainty.

Once more, we presume that practical and impartial men will not hesitate to give their aid

in restoring to the Established Church that INDEPENDENCE, and those vital functions, which Christianity demands for her; and without which she will not be able, henceforth, to compete with communions possessing such functions; and which are absolutely necessary to prevent convulsive and perilous reforms, demanded at shorter and shorter intervals, and always in a louder and still louder tone. Deprived, by the progress of just and liberal opinions, of that power which at first she exercised, after the example of the Spiritual Despotism of the Papacy, the English Church is now, in almost every sense, destitute of authority, and lies at the mercy of her foes—and of her friends. To be qualified to exert a more general and beneficial influence, the Church must breathe with her own lungs, speak with her own mouth, and show the energy of a pulse and a heart—her own.

This necessary restoration to her just prerogatives the Church will not expect to receive (nor should she desire it) without, at the same time, admitting that due leaven of popular influence, without which, in fact, there can be no vitality in any Church, and apart from which, church power will never be any thing else but a Spiritual Despotism.

NOTES AND ILLUSTRATIONS.

APPENDIX TO SECTION IV.

Page 119.—Very early it was admitted that the apostolic writings afford general principles, rather than formal enactments for the regulation of worship and church government. Thus, Tertullian, little more than a century after the death of the apostles, after reciting various religious usages, generally prevalent in his time, says, 'Harum et aliarum ejusmodi disciplinarum si legem expostules Scripturarum, nullam invenies; traditio tibi pretendetur auctrix, consuetudo confirmatrix, et fides observatrix.'—*De Corona.* Unhappily the Church abused the indeterminate constitution of Scripture in matters of worship, by adding superstition to superstition without end. This process must certainly have commenced simultaneously with Christianity itself; otherwise it could not have happened that the numerous observances mentioned by Tertullian, as generally prevalent in his time, and as already established by *long custom*, should have come to be so regarded throughout the Eastern, Western, and African Churches. It is more than matter of curiosity to note what these ceremonies were: among them we find, the three immersions in baptism—the milk and honey of peace—

oblations for the dead, and the crossing of the forehead at every movement, on going out, and on returning home, in dressing, and putting on the shoes, at the bath, at table, at lighting of lamps, at lying down, at sitting, and, in a word, at every separate act of common life. Those who appeal to the testimony of these early writers in support of certain observances, ought to admit it also when urged in favour of other usages equally prevalent in the same age. Researches into Christian antiquity are indeed highly important; but the fair result, we may feel assured, will not be to afford a triumph to any one existing party over others; but rather a conviction, on all sides, of the folly and sin of breaking communion with our brethren on account of practices or forms never to be authoritatively determined.

Page 127.—The readiness with which baptism was administered by the apostles, and admission into the society of the faithful granted, stands on the face of St. Luke's narrative. A professed desire to receive baptism, as a believer in the Messiahship of Jesus, was the sole qualification. Many, no doubt, thus entered the Church, quickly to be expelled from it, on proof of their unworthiness. We hear, in the Acts, of no scrutiny of the heart; how, indeed, should any such difficult process have been attended to, when thousands were initiated in a day? It may not be impertinent here to remind the reader that the clause, which stands in the received text, and is put into the mouth of Philip, as addressed to the Ethiopian eunuch—"If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest," is deemed, on good reasons, to be an interpolation. As we advance toward the second and third centuries, we find the process of admission into the Church to have become continually more and more complicated, until, at length, all the pomp and mystery, the artificial delays, and the affected

tardiness that belonged to the heathen initiations, had been transferred to the Christian Church. This one point of the terms and mode of admission might be well taken as a criterion of religious simplicity, or of sophistication — conjoined always with a reference to the efficiency of discipline in the same society. Easy *admission*, along with easy *discipline*, proves very little in favour of a Church.

Page 130.—Several of those confirmed disagreements that now divide the Christian commonwealth, relate immediately to the much-obscured question concerning the extension or the restriction of ecclesiastical privileges, as intended by the apostles. This difficulty cleared up, the way would be open for consolidating two or three of our parties. The Church of England, borne out by the unquestionable practice of the earliest times to which existing evidence extends, takes the broadest ground; but the terms in which she does so involve almost the certainty of serious misunderstandings on the part of the people; and they demand revision. The testimony borne by the Baptists against certain superstitions of the age of Cyprian, has failed to command the respect to which, abstractedly, it was entitled, in consequence of the offensive dogmatism of that party in relation to points not now to be decisively determined; and especially have the Baptists disgusted men of intelligence, by the absurdity of attaching prime importance to the sort of ablution which constitutes Christian baptism, and by the bigotry of the practices resulting from that error. It is as certain as any thing of the kind can be, that several modes of performing the rite of baptism were in use in the apostolic age. The Baptists would not merely serve themselves, but the Christian world at large, and in an important manner, by frankly giving up their ill-judged pertinacity on the question of immersion. A copious

affusion would abundantly satisfy, not only common sense and every general principle of analogy, but all the evidence which can now be adduced on the subject.

Page 131.—St. Peter, who tells Christians that they are universally the members of a "royal priesthood," recognizes, in the same breath, the function and authority of the ruling and teaching elders of the Church; and in giving to these a caution against the tyrannic exercise of their power, he plainly implies that power was actually in their hands. On the same principle, when these elders are warned not to assume the episcopal office for "filthy lucre's sake," we inevitably infer that these official persons were then receiving a salary or stipend, on account of their services; even as the Lord had appointed. If not, what pertinence was there in the admonition? St. Peter acknowledges a GOVERNING CLASS, or order, supported by the contributions of the society. Of what value then, in relation to ecclesiastical controversies, is that argument against the distinction between clergy and laity, which has been drawn from the priestly dignity of *all believers?* Neander's learned book will be read with respectful attention; but it is every where indistinct, and unsatisfactory in argument.

Page 133.—Nothing can be more full or conclusive than the inferences resulting from St. Paul's expostulation with the Corinthians, 1 Cor. ix., on the subject of his own behaviour among them in pecuniary matters. Impelled by special and personal motives, he had abstained from using for his own benefit, an unquestionable authority, or official right, to demand maintenance, as a person devoted to the religious public service of the Church. To this maintenance all such persons were entitled, not merely on grounds

of general equity, but by the Lord's formal enactment; and this enactment is, moreover, explicitly referred to the analogy of the Jewish sacerdotal institute. In later times, the mode of applying this analogy might be open to objection; but how can we consider the employment of it as altogether unwarrantable, when we find it thus suggested to us by the inspired apostle? The clerical institution, that is to say, the setting apart an order of men as religious teachers and rulers, involving their right of maintenance, is the best defined and most clearly established of all the external parts of Christianity.

Page 136.—The silence of the apostles on certain important subjects, such for example as slavery and polygamy, and their indistinct reference to the observance of a seventh day, is of a piece with their leaving the maintenance of the ministers of religion to be adjusted by communities in the mode which circumstances might render expedient. That they say nothing of endowments, or of national establishments, affords no presumption whatever against any such means or measures, when apparently beneficial. How can those, employ such a presumptive argument who are always telling us that Christ and the apostles did not forbid slavery, because, in the then actual state of society, it could not have been abolished? Christianity gives us principles, which good sense is to apply to the varying occasions of life.

Page 138.—The apparent force of the appeals made at present to the pecuniary economy of the apostolic churches, consists in an extreme misapprehension of facts relating to those primitive societies. The Church of a city, as of Jerusalem, Antioch, Alexandria, or Rome, was constituted of many more believers than, on ordinary occasions, assembled under one roof. The Church was

served also by many, or by several clerical persons, ministering among the congregations in rotation. The contributions of the people passed into a common fund, whence distribution was made, first to the poor, and then to the officers of the Church, according to the need or merits of each. The ministers therefore, although dependent, as a body, upon the gratuities of the people at large, were individually wholly independent of single congregations, and of the opulent leaders of such congregations. Although the community of goods which obtained in the Church at Jerusalem during the first flow of zeal and affection was soon discontinued, it served to give apostolic sanction to the practice of holding a fund, and of accumulating contributions. Henceforth no Church could deem this practice to be either unlawful or inexpedient: in fact it universally prevailed; and when combined with the plurality of clerical persons attached to each Church, placed them individually in a position *essentially* unlike that of a modern congregational minister.

The process by which very considerable funds came into the hands, and remained under the control of the bishop, in each Church, was very simple. Apostolic precept, as well as the spirit of the Gospel, impelled the Christian societies to provide for all their poor members; but to do so was found to demand permanent resources, and especially in seasons of persecution, when many were stripped of their property, or were rendered incapable of pursuing their ordinary callings. Moreover, some became chargeable to the Church, who, on becoming Christians, had abandoned immoral occupations, and were not able entirely to maintain themselves in any other manner. The leaders of the Church therefore, soon found themselves liable to a weighty responsibility, which naturally went on increasing, until, in fact, a large number of the sick, the aged, the young, and the imbecile and idle, looked to them daily for bread. All this was

irrespective of the maintenance of the ministers of religion; but both the poor and the clergy drew from one and the same purse. The most urgent reasons, and the dictates of common prudence, impelled those who stood liable to these various demands, as well to accumulate a fund, as to keep alive the liberality of the opulent, and to encourage the practice of making large occasional donations to the Church, and of enriching it by bequests. Besides the weekly oblations, from which none but the paupers of the Church were excused, incidental gifts, sometimes of great value, flowed into the bishop's chest. "Honourable women not a few," were, from the first, numbered with the faithful; and these, with that pious generosity in which the softer sex has always outshone the other, often bestowed their entire fortune, or a large part of it, upon the Church. The established custom of securing treasure—gold, silver, and precious stones, by dedicating it in the temples, was adopted substantially by Christians, (see the sixty-fifth of the Canons of the Apostles; Cotelerius, tom. i. p. 446,) and so it happened that the Church plate, in the principal cities, was frequently of great value, and constituted a fund available on occasions of distress, and was not seldom employed for the redemption of captive brethren.

Now of these large funds the bishop was trustee and distributor, at discretion. The deacons were his collectors, his accomptants, and his almoners; but not, as they should have been, the people's agents or representatives, watching over and controlling it for the common benefit. Indeed, a gradual transition, highly injurious in its consequences, very early rendered the deacon's office, as tribune of the people (if we may so style him) nugatory, and made him one with the clerical body. Inferior as he was, in relation to the presbyters and the bishop, he was numbered with *ecclesiastics*—he participated in their feelings, promoted their interests,

and shared in their advantages. It was thus that the real and effective counterbalance of powers was lost, and lost earlier than we have the means precisely of ascertaining. It was of little or no avail that the people were allowed to hold up their hands on certain occasions: this suffrage gave them indeed a choice of masters, but no control over their masters. The people looked up to a sacerdotal body, including several gradations of office, and in occupation of large funds, which they held and distributed irresponsibly. In the apostolic intention and practice, not only did the people elect those who were to manage the pecuniary interests of the community, but these officers acted for the people, and for the ministers, with an independent power. The silent movement of these officers toward the one party, and away from the other, was alone enough to annul the liberties of the one, and to spoil the simplicity and integrity of the other.

It does not require to be formally proved that the position of a modern minister of a chapel, insulated and dependent upon the will and wishes of those who raise his salary, and who receives that salary from deacons—laymen in fact and in feeling, does not bear comparison, in any sense, with the circumstances of the clergy in the ancient Churches. Even the smallest society had, like that of Philippi, its "bishops and deacons," that is to say, *several* clerical persons, who stood together, and consulted for their common welfare; and this college, moreover, had the administration of an ample revenue. These two positions, instead of being nearly the same, are *extremes;* and both must be condemned as faulty. The circumstances of modern times, which allow of, and indeed demand, the entire separation of clerical and eleemosynary funds, would make the adjustment of what relates to the former so much the more simple and easy. Even if the voluntary principle were adhered to for the maintenance of the ministers of religion,

there can be no need that it should be left to operate in that unpropitious form which congregationalism gives to it. Let but a few congregations—whether of a city or district, be molten together as a Church, and the funds of all consolidated, and equitably distributed, and then the *general* dependence of the clergy upon the people is rendered so far circuitous as serves to abate the importance of the latter, and to relieve the former from personal humiliations, and cruel anxieties.

There is much involved often in the selection of phrases. The goods of the Church soon came to be called πτωχικά, — the poor's fund, out of which the bishop was to take the necessary charges of the clergy, and his own expenditure: thus the canons of the council of Neo-Cæsarea; κυριακὰ χρήματα πτωχικὰ λέγεται, and of the bishop's discretion, in regard to this fund is it said, κἂν ἀνεκλόγιστον ἐξουσίαν ἔχωσιν οἱ ἐπίσκοποι...

On the important point of the subserviency of the deacons to the bishops, and the entire abrogation of their *popular character*, abundant evidence may be produced from all sides. The Apostolic Constitutions are admissible in relation to the prevailing usages of the times preceding that in which they were in part collected, and in part fabricated:—the second book contains many passages bearing on this subject. "Let the deacon report every thing to the bishop, even as Christ to the Father; yet himself manage what he can, having received his authority, to this effect, from the bishop, as Christ from the Father. In a word, let the deacon be the bishop's ear, the bishop's eye, the bishop's heart, the bishop's soul, so that he may be lightened of all cares, but such as are chief." lib. ii. cap. 44. The deacons distributed the elements to the people (Justin Martyr, Apol. 2) but were not considered as competent to "preside over the mysteries;" they might, however, on occasions of necessity,

administer baptism; indeed we find this rite to have been performed sometimes by persons altogether secular, and even by military men (see, among other evidence, the mosaics collected by Ciampini). They were also the receivers of oblations, &c. but not the trustees of church property. Whatever was substantial, as a means of power, had passed from the control of the people at a very early period. The usage of speech in reference to these officers varied, the deacons being sometimes called clergy, and sometimes not.

Page 146.—As well in relation to the election of presbyters or bishops, as to the maintenance of both, and their dependence upon the people, the argument has been rendered nugatory by forgetting the total dissimilarity of the circumstances of a modern and an ancient congregation. Useless learning has been employed to prove that very many of the early Churches were very small, and not more numerous than might conveniently assemble in one building; and, moreover, that the pastors of such single congregations were called—bishops. But let it be proved (rare instances, if indeed there are *any* such, excepted) that primitive Churches *generally*, like our modern congregations, were served by a solitary clerical person. This can never be done: the bishop, or the principal pastor, how humble soever his state, and how narrow soever his circle, had his colleagues—his presbyters, and his deacons; not to mention the neighbouring bishops, and one very important occasion recourse might be had to a sacerdotal college, wherein affairs were discussed and arranged. On the death of the bishop himself, or of a presbyter, whatever the mode of appointing a successor might be, it was not the *people alone* that acted, but the CHURCH, guided and controlled by its surviving leaders. Here then is an *essential* difference between the ancient church polity, and that of modern congregationalism.

Page 155.—On general grounds it is desirable that the argument concerning the source of the authority vested in the clergy should first be treated as a purely biblical question; and then distinctly, as a point of ecclesiastical antiquity. But this separation of the two lines of argument has a peculiar importance in relation to the Principle professed by some, that the New Testament is the ONLY LAW, and the SUFFICIENT LAW, as well in matters of church polity, as in matters of faith and morality. Let then the whole biblical evidence, bearing on the subject of the clerical function be reviewed, at the same time dismissing the recollection of facts, the knowledge of which is drawn from other sources than the Scriptures. Our question then is this—according to the letter of the apostolic writings, or according to any fair and clear inferences, thence to be derived, are the people warranted in assuming to themselves the power of calling to the work of the ministry, or of electing and dismissing their particular religious teachers?

It does not seem equitable, or at least, it cannot be deemed conclusive, to adduce our Lord's appointment of his immediate agents as pertinent to this inquiry; for it will not follow from his calling and ordaining whom he would, that, after he had left his Church, these same persons should, in the same sovereign manner, appoint their successors. It is to the precepts and the practice of the apostles, after their Lord's ascension, that we must look for our guidance in this, as in other instances. We turn therefore at once to St. Luke's narrative of the first years of the Church.

Whether or not it belongs *directly* to our question, the instance of the appointment of a successor to the fallen apostle should be adverted to. The part taken by the little company of the Lord's immediate friends in filling up the number of the twelve, was merely to look out from among themselves such as were qualified to

stand in the room of Judas, by the fact of their having constantly consorted with Jesus, from the very commencement of his personal ministry, until the close of it. Two were found who had done so (beside the eleven) and these, being placed before Him who "knoweth all hearts," were solemnly subjected by lot to the Lord's decision; and having given their lots, the lot fell on Matthias, who thenceforward was reckoned with the twelve: he thus became the Lord's κλῆρος, one of the Lord's *clergy*. "Nam et cleros et clericos hinc appellatos puto," says Augustine (referring to the appointment of Matthias). This instance may be regarded as an extension only of Christ's direct agency, in constituting the apostolic college; and therefore not conclusive in relation to our question; but we cannot but think that it affords a natural and simple explanation of the origin of the term clergy, as applied specially to the ministers of religion.

The transaction reported in the sixth chapter of the Acts, may or may not be regarded as the origin of the deacon's office. In substance, the duties committed to these seven stewards were the same as those afterwards discharged, in all the Churches, by the deacons. The seven were men commended by their eminent personal piety, and general good fame, to the confidence of all, and they were entrusted with the funds of the society, and with the distribution of them. The several parts of this transaction are very clearly distinguished in the narrative;—the proposition to relinquish the secular affairs of the Church came from the apostles, who had power to retain, if they had thought proper, that charge. It was the apostles also who committed this trust to the seven; but it was the multitude, the mass of believers, who chose these officers, and chose them "from among themselves." This instance ought, assuredly, to be considered as indicative of a GENERAL PRINCIPLE, and a very important one, or shall we say of two principles, namely; that the

ministers of religion do well to discharge their hands wholly of pecuniary affairs; and that the choice of trustees for the management of these interests rests with the people at large. An effective adherence to these principles would have precluded a very great proportion of all the abuses and corruptions that stain church history from the first age to the present. The χειροτονία of the people, and the χειροθεσία of the apostles, are plainly exemplified in the appointment of these seven churchwardens. That Philip, one of the seven (if the same Philip) is found (chap. viii. 5) "preaching the word," does not make him other than a layman; for it is manifest that the believers at large, as well as the deacons, in the first age, used the liberty of preaching and teaching.

The sending Paul and Barnabas on a special mission, and by the immediate indication of the Holy Spirit (xiii. 2) does not bear upon our subject. We refer to it only to exclude it. In passing, we may note the allusion to John (Mark) who attended Paul and Barnabas, we might say as their deacon, ὑπηρέτης, the term very early, if not from the first, employed interchangeably with διάκονος: so Clemens Alex. Strom. lib. vii. τὴν ὑπηρετικὴν δε, οἱ διάκονοι, speaking of the *species of service* performed severally by presbyters and deacons.

Χειροτονήσαντες δὲ αὐτοῖς κατ' ἐκκλησίαν πρεσβυτέρους, (Acts xiv. 23,) "ordaining for them elders in each congregation." But who was it that *stretched forth the hand* in electing and appointing these elders? the construction leads us without doubt to say, Paul and Barnabas. Besides; the democratic sense of the term, as implying the voting of the people, is balanced by its frequent use on occasions when an absolute appointment by an individual authority is intended.—"Sed etiam, absque suffragiis eligere aliquem."—Schleusner, and see Suicer, *in voc.* The word therefore being open to both meanings, we follow the manifest sense of the passage; or if not, some

direct evidence must be produced in opposition to that sense. Apart from such evidence, this passage has no weight on the side of the popular election of church rulers.

Though relating to another article of church polity, the account of the Council of Jerusalem (chap. xv.) should be adverted to as proof of that open and popular constitution of the apostolic societies, apart from which it can never be safe to grant to the clergy the independence and the high prerogative that may justly be claimed for them. "Then it seemed good to the apostles and to the presbyters, WITH THE WHOLE CONGREGATION, to send men," &c. The decrees decided upon in this council were sent forth as determined "by the apostles and presbyters," yet with the knowledge and consent of the multitude.

An allusion to the popular appointment of bishops and presbyters, if there had been any such usage in the Church of Ephesus, might naturally have found a place in St. Paul's address to the rulers of that Church (Acts xx). We would not however lay stress upon the absence of it; only observing, that the phrase actually employed directly favours the supposition that these officers had received their authority irrespectively of the popular will. "Look to yourselves, and to all the flock, in the which the Holy Spirit has set you, bishops, to tend the congregation of the Lord."....Certainly this passage contains nothing that avails the popular argument.

We have thus reviewed, and it is soon done, the canonical record of the first years of the Christian Church, and have found a few incidental phrases, only, that at all relate to the appointment or election of teachers and rulers. Of these few phrases, *one* is etymologically, of ambiguous import, and therefore abstractedly indecisive; but it is thrown to the side of authoritative ordination by the grammatical construction of the passage. We are com-

pelled then to say that the doctrine of the popular creation and election of church officers (deacons excepted) receives no reasonable support, direct or indirect, from the inspired history of the first promulgation of the Gospel. If, in fact, presbyters and bishops were, from the commencement, chosen by the people, and were removable at their pleasure, and if this popular power be, as it is alleged, the main pillar of church polity, and the most important and precious of all the privileges of Christians, in their social capacity, it is impossible not to feel astounded at finding that it is neither affirmed, nor exemplified, nor alluded to, by the writer who has furnished us with almost all we can know of the constitution of the primitive societies. It is next to be inquired, if the apostolic epistles supply, in this respect, the deficiency of the narrative of St. Luke.

The very structure of the apostolic epistles contradicts the doctrine of the Romish Church, that no discretion is left to the laity in matters of religion; for it is to the faithful at large that these letters, appealing to their judgment and conscience, are addressed. Questions of theology, and of discipline, are laid before the people without restriction. At the same time, these epistles, very frequently, and very distinctly, recognize the authority of church rulers; yet no where affirm, or suppose, that this authority was of popular origination, or that it was, in any way, under popular control.

The Epistle of James does not afford evidence bearing on our question, unless we so consider the allusion, chap. v. 14, to the presbyters of the Church, and to the efficacy of their official services in restoring the sick. The First Epistle of Peter goes a little further, yet only a little. The advice, chap. iv. 10, 11, determines nothing, and supports no inference; but the direct admonition addressed (chap. v.) to the presbyters, is pertinent in proving, as we have already said, if it needed to be

proved, the existence of a ruling order, possessed of power ample enough to expose them to the temptation of using it despotically; and also that this governing class received a remuneration for their services, and had opportunity to enrich themselves in a manner incompatible with the Christian profession. Moreover, it is implied that there might be some, called upon to discharge episcopal duties, who would seek to excuse themselves from the burden, and to escape the personal danger often attending this distinction in times of persecution. Such are exhorted to perform their parts not reluctantly, or from compulsion, but with a ready mind. These advices, one might have thought, would include some instructions addressed to the people, on the important subject of the election of their pastors, or of their removal when necessary, if indeed any such powers actually rested with the people. The subject of the false teachers, predicted in the Second Epistle, we have had occasion to mention, and here again it seems natural to look for a caution against precipitancy in the choice of teachers.

In the times of St. John, the Christian societies were open to the intrusion of false teachers—probably self-constituted, who laboured to establish another doctrine than that of the apostles. These were to be rejected, according to the rule given chap. iv. 2. This advice recognizes, therefore, a power of discrimination, lodged with the people, and it furnishes a corrective of the abuses that might result from the absolute irresponsibility of pastors. In whatever way the people received their teachers, they were not required to accept from them doctrines subversive of Christianity itself. It deserves to be noted that these false prophets appear to have been *itinerant* preachers, who, destitute of credit and authority at home, nevertheless found the means abroad, and where they were unknown, to recommend themselves

to the simple. We must gather this also from St. John's Letter to the Elect Lady. "If any one come among you, and does not bring with him this doctrine, show him no hospitality, neither hail him as a friend; for whosoever does so, becomes a sharer in his evil deeds." The Epistle to Gaius affords direct evidence of the early abuse of church authority. Whether the ambitious and despotic Diotrephes were bishop, deacon, or merely an opulent manager of the congregation, cannot be known; if the former, which is the most probable, why not advise the Church to remove him from his place? This sort of indistinct evidence does not sustain positive conclusions on either side; and certainly does not yield what we are now in search of; namely, an indication of the popular creation of bishops and presbyters, in the time of the apostles.

The Epistle of Jude adds some weight to our conjecture, that the early Churches were troubled and perverted, chiefly by wandering teachers, ἀστέρες πλανῆται, men scouted and condemned at home, yet artful enough to gain a hearing, as they passed from city to city. St. Jude seems in haste to overtake some of these pernicious itinerants, and to caution the Churches against them. He felt himself compelled, he says, to write "with all despatch," to forewarn the brethren of certain men who were slipping themselves into the Churches, with the worst intentions, and who, wherever they came, began by reviling or opposing the constituted authorities. Lascivious in their manners, and licentious in their principles, they openly professed to contemn the established powers, nor scrupled to blaspheme dignities. St. Peter says to the presbyters, μηδ' ὡς κατακυριεύοντες τῶν κλήρων. St. Jude, speaking of these contumacious men, affirms that they set at naught κυριότητα. There was then a LORDSHIP, or masterly authority in the

Churches, which the one apostle forbids to be abused, and which the other forbids to be despised. In conclusion, St. Jude gives us another mark of these troublers of the common peace;—they were such as had "distanced themselves," or broke away from their connexions; *οἱ ἀποδιορίζοντες*. It does not seem that errors and abuses had ordinarily arisen from those whom the apostles had themselves ordained, in every city; but from strangers —from self-constituted teachers, or those whom the people had gathered to themselves: *ἑαυτοῖς ἐπισωρεύσουσι διδασκάλους*.

Copious and various as are the Epistles of St. Paul, and full as they are of allusions to ecclesiastical proceedings, we may fairly expect to obtain from them some recognition of the popular appointment of teachers, if that had actually been the practice of the Churches which he founded.

Several of the exhortations that fill the twelfth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, bear upon the discharge of public religious functions. A diversity of offices, founded upon the natural, or supernatural diversity of gifts, is implied; including preaching and teaching, ministering (as the deacons) distributing alms, and presiding over the Church; but nothing is added concerning the appointment of individuals to such offices. We ought, however, to mark the care with which the apostle enjoins the general rule of submission to constituted authorities; and the caution he gives against the authors of faction (chap. xvi. 17); and the teachers of plausible novelties. The same caution expanded, and still more earnestly enforced, meets us again and again, in the two Epistles to the faulty and chaotic Corinthian Church; where, as it is evident, the democratic feeling had a strength against which the whole weight of the apostolic authority, miraculously sustained, had to bear. The

formal warrant of ministerial maintenance (1 Cor. ix.) has already been referred to. The right of the teacher is not, as we see, made to rest upon the claim involved in a popular election, which would have been natural, had such been the method of appointment to office. 'Did you not call and choose your ministers, and ought you not, therefore, to maintain them?' The apostle does not thus reason.

The remarkable passage (1 Cor. xii. 28) in which the ranks and offices of the Christian body are enumerated, including, as it does, ordinary and permanent, as well as extraordinary and temporary functions, would have seemed a fit place for inserting, or for alluding to, the important principle of the popular election of officers. The absence of such an allusion is not indeed *conclusive*; but it leaves us still unwarranted in exercising the power. Again, a specific instance presents itself at the close of the epistle, in which the want of the evidence we are searching for amounts to presumptive evidence on the other side. The family of Stephanas had given themselves up to the service of the Church. "I beseech you," says the apostle, "that ye submit yourselves to such." Yet even an apostle does not claim a despotic power over the opinions of the people. "Not as if we were lords over your faith" (2 Cor. i. 24). Thus we find power, and power springing not, as it seems, from the people; but yet not a power which might be carried beyond the bounds of reason and love.

The instance adverted to (2 Cor. viii. 19) is one of several, showing the common practice of the Churches—a practice carefully adhered to by St. Paul, of entrusting contributions to persons chosen and commissioned by the contributors. This equitable and necessary usage should never be lost sight of. The apostle was highly sensitive in pecuniary matters, and scrupulously avoided placing himself in any position which might lay him

open to ungenerous imputations. In a word, he well understood, and never forgot, the distinction between spiritual and secular affairs; it has been by meddling with the latter, that church rulers have rendered themselves unworthy of the control they should possess over the former.

Another allusion to false teachers (2 Cor. xi. 4) strengthens the belief that they were commonly of the travelling sort. "He that *cometh unto you*; preaching another Jesus;" and these itinerants, it appears, behaved themselves, where they came, in the most insolent, despotic, and rapacious manner (verse 20). These two epistles then, ecclesiastical as they are in their topics, do not furnish a particle of evidence, direct or indirect, of the kind we are seeking.

The Epistle to the Galatians touches our question only remotely, and in one point, where it enjoins the maintenance of the teachers by the taught (chap. vi. 6) that to the Ephesians contains a passage parallel to one already referred to, which enumerates the several classes of church officers, of whom it is affirmed, that they were "given to the Church by the Lord himself;" and this list includes, not merely "apostles, and prophets, and evangelists," but also "pastors and teachers;" through what instrumentality given, we are not informed. Hitherto therefore, we have made no progress toward the establishment of the popular right, in the appointment of teachers. The address of the Epistle to the Philippians has been before adduced, as attesting the important fact of the plurality of clerical persons, in the apostolic Churches. That those of the upper class are styled "bishops," in common, is a circumstance altogether insignificant, except in relation to the trivial controversy about the names of office. Whether these ἐπίσκοποι all ruled with equal power, or submitted to the guidance of a senior or president, we are not told.

"Say to Archippus, look to the ministry (the deaconship) which thou hast received in the Lord, that thou fulfil it." This is all we gather from the Epistle to the Colossians, touching church officers; except the epithet bestowed upon one and another, of "faithful ministers in the Lord." The Epistles to the Church at Thessalonica recognize that right of maintenance which St. Paul and his companions waived in their own case (1 Thess. ii. 6, and 2 Thess. iii. 9). "We beseech you, brethren, that ye know (recognize in their official capacity) those that labour among you, and preside over you in the Lord, and that admonish you; and that ye render to them the very highest regard and affection, on account of their work." (1 Thess. v. 12.) Such is the apostolic exhortation; but it is not qualified by any reference to popular control over these officers. We are still at fault, then, and pass to the Epistle to the Hebrews; which contains two passages only that touch our subject (chap. xiii. 7, and 17) and the first very slightly. "Bear in mind your rulers, who have spoken to you the word of God," &c. There were then governors, and these were preachers as well as presidents. "Yield obedience, τοῖς ἡγουμένοις ὑμῶν, to your governors, and submit yourselves; for they (as those who are to render an account) watch for your souls." This unqualified advice demands grave consideration. To whom were these rulers to render their account—to their constituents, or to the Lord? assuredly to the latter; and their independence of the people might, not unfairly, be inferred from this reference to their higher accountability. But, waiving this implied inference, there is room to ask whether this naked statement of the duty of submission to pastors and bishops, unaccompanied by any allusion to the sovereignty of the people in constituting and removing them, suggests the belief that such a sovereignty was actually recognized, or in any way contemplated by the writer?

The contrary must, in all candour, be granted. If the absolute style in which submission to *secular* rulers is elsewhere enforced by the apostles is adduced as a parallel instance, and as showing that the absence of a qualifying phrase must not be assumed as conclusive in favour of non-resistance to intolerable despotisms, it should be remembered that it was not the province of the apostles to teach principles of *civil* government, which men are to digest for themselves, and that they looked no further than to the immediate duty of Christians—as such, and not as citizens. But the principles of *church* government came directly within their sphere; and in these matters it is to them we must look for our guidance and warrant. If the apostles, in commanding obedience to pastors, say *nothing* of the people's sovereignty, we are not at liberty to assume that they admitted any such sovereignty. The admonition before us would naturally have drawn with it the counter caution; or, if not, it would *somewhere else* have found a place.

It only remains to advert to the three personal and clerical Epistles of St. Paul. If these Epistles, just as they are in substance, had been addressed to Churches—to "all the faithful in Christ Jesus," at Rome, or Ephesus, or Antioch, it would have been strenuously, and indeed not unfairly argued, that it was the believers at large who were to discharge the ecclesiastical duties to which the instructions they contain relate. But it is not so, and the presumption is strong that the selection and appointment of church officers rested mainly, if not exclusively, with the individuals to whom the general superintendence of the Churches had been committed. We possess indeed some direct evidence in favour of the popular election of deacons, at least when these officers acted as the trustees of church revenues; nevertheless, as they were not, in the first instance (if it be an instance in point) installed without apostolic ordination,

so were they subject, afterwards, to the approval and control of the primate—Timothy.

One cannot but forcibly feel that, if the election of pastors by the people had been an element of primitive Christianity, or if it had been prospectively intended by the apostles to take effect after their own demise, some allusion to it would have found a place in these ecclesiastical letters, or, as we may call them, decretals. The solemn charge committed to Timothy was, to repress the insolence of false teachers, and generally, to preserve order in "the house of God." That this supremacy was altogether an extraordinary and temporary extension of apostolic authority, is a gratuitous assumption, not to be admitted until proof is adduced in support of it.

We find it admitted as lawful, nay praiseworthy, that a man should "desire the episcopal dignity," nor does St. Paul give any countenance to the affected reluctance of the *nolo episcopari*. Yet none were to be admitted to this office but such as were recommended by their personal fitness; and the same of the deacons, in regard to whom the qualification must include their wives.

"Rebuke not a presbyter" (youth as thou art) but rather "entreat him as a father." Timothy then was so placed as to be called upon to urge the elders to the diligent and faithful discharge of their duties. He had, moreover, the superintendency of ruling elders, and of some who were rulers merely, and not teachers and preachers also. These, when they combined both kinds of service, were to receive "a double stipend, for the labourer is worthy of his reward." "Admit not an accusation against a presbyter, unless sustained by two or three witnesses." Timothy then exercised a high jurisdiction over the conduct of the presbyters. Do not let us style him, archbishop; nevertheless his functions were precisely those of a bishop of bishops; for presbyters are bishops. If all this be not "written for our learning,"

peremptory and conclusive reasons must be furnished to the contrary. Until they are produced, we shall calmly conclude that the PRINCIPLE of a HIERARCHY is recommended to us by apostolic practice and precept.

"Lay hands suddenly on no man:" the power of ordination then rested with Timothy. This power, implied in the First Epistle, is distinctly affirmed in the Second. "That which thou hast heard from me, among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be qualified to teach others." This is nothing less than a formal announcement of the process of ecclesiastical creation; but it includes not the most distant allusion to the part to be taken therein by the people. How far this omission is to be regarded as conclusive against popular interference in this matter we shall not affect to determine. In relation to our present inquiry it cannot escape our notice that the approaching times of religious degeneracy were, by the apostle, expressly designated by the circumstance of the wilfulness of the people in spurning the sound doctrine they had heretofore received, and in "gathering to themselves teachers" who would consult their licentious tastes. This prophetic indication, at least, does not *favour* the practice of the popular election of religious instructors.

The Epistle to Titus is in harmony with those to Timothy, on the point before us. Titus had been left in Crete, with supreme power to regulate church affairs, and to "set up," or appoint, presbyters in each city of the island. Why not add—"such as the Churches shall select and approve?" "A bishop," that is, such as these ruling presbyters, "must be blameless," &c. The authority of Titus, like that of Timothy, was of no precarious or despicable sort;—it was AUTHORITY (chap. ii. 15).

We have then gone through the apostolic Scriptures, noting every passage that seems to bear upon the subject

of the appointment or the powers of church teachers and rulers; not so much as one of these passages gives support, directly or indirectly, to the alleged right of the people to elect, appoint, and remove their pastors. Yet let it be fully understood that we are not now labouring to overthrow the popular influence in this instance; but are only showing that, if admitted in fact, it must be justified on some other ground than that of scriptural precept and example.

Certain bodies loudly say — 'our PRINCIPLE is a strict adherence to the word of God, as well in matters of polity, as in articles of faith and rules of duty. What the Bible knows nothing of, we know nothing of: our Churches are purely apostolic, so far as we can understand the apostolic writings. Traditions we reject; the practice of the ancient Churches is not our guide; the Bible, and the Bible alone, is the religion of Protestants.' Yet these very parties maintain the right of the people to choose their ministers, as the prime and most precious article of their church polity. Can these two professions consist? and is there not room for calling upon those who avow doctrines so incompatible, to reconsider the principles of their ecclesiastical system?

Page 157.—It has been common to inveigh against the distinction made between clergy and laity, which is assumed as having been the origin of spiritual despotism. This misdirected objection has put out of view the real evil, namely, that *disjunction* of clergy and laity which the former contrived to effect, and in great measure by embracing the deacons, as clerical persons, and so depriving the people of their agents and representatives. The author has already referred to the Apostolic Constitutions on this point: he would not be misunderstood in quoting that curious collection. There is little doubt it embodies a considerable portion of the most ancient,

traditions and usages of the Church, mixed up with the compiler's fabrications. Altogether, it affords good evidence concerning that state of things which was prevalent, or which was becoming so, in the third century, or which then needed a little help to give it authority and universality. These Constitutions every where bear testimony to the fact of the exclusion of the laity from all real influence in church affairs. Here we find a most serious departure from apostolic practice, and the learned writers who have so vainly laboured to show that the distinction between clergy and laity was of late origin, might better have spent their time in exhibiting the rise and progress of the abuse which was superadded to the distinction. The genuine epistle of Clement to the Corinthians, one of the earliest of the extant uncanonical writings, shows that the terms clergy and laity were used in his time, as we find them in a later age: ὁ λαϊκὸς ἄνθρωπος τοῖς λαϊκοῖς προστάγμασιν δέδεται, To the same effect Ignatius, *ad Smyrn.*; and Tertullian in many places: one of these is so full in the evidence it affords of the fixedness of hierarchical distinctions in that early age, that it may well be quoted. The writer, *de Præscript. Hæreticorum* is inveighing against the disorderly practices of the heretics, and their contempt of that dignity and authority which the Catholic Church maintained. What the Church was, we here learn from the contrast implied between it, and the separatists. In primis quis catechumenus, quis fidelis (who is *initiated* and who not) incertum est: pariter adeunt, pariter audiunt, pariter orant: ..., omnes tument, omnes scientiam pollicentur. Antè sunt perfecti catechumeni, quàm edocti. Ipsæ mulieres hæreticæ, quàm procaces! quæ audeant docere, contendere, exorcismos agere, curationes repromittere, forsitan et tingere (baptise). Ordinationes eorum temerariæ, leves, inconstantes. Nunc neophytos conlocant, nunc seculo obstrictos, nunc apostatas nostros, ut gloria eos obligent,

quia veritate non possunt. Nusquam facilius proficitur, quam in castris rebellium, ubi ipsum esse illic, promereri est. Itaque alius hodie Episcopus, cras alius: hodie Diaconus, qui cras Lector: hodie Presbyter, qui cras Laïcus, nam et Laïcis sacerdotalia munera injungunt. The contrary of all this was therefore the common and long established practice of the Church, at the close of the second century. Again, the same writer, *de Fuga in Persecutione;* Sed quum ipsi auctores (chiefs) id est, ipsi Diaconi, Presbyteri, et Episcopi fugiunt, quomodo Laïcus, &c.; or again, ubi tres, ecclesia est, licet Laïci. *De Exhort. Castitatis.*

Page 166.—'No writer of the age of Cyprian;' in truth the earliest of the church writers, now extant, employ the terms of office in a well-defined and technical manner. Probably, before the death of the apostles, all these designations had been fixed in their artificial sense, and had ceased to be convertible. So at least we find them in the writings of the apostolic fathers; and in Irenæus, often, if not uniformly.

Page 171.—The first Christians attached great importance to the circumstance of partaking of one and the same loaf; or of bread consecrated at one table, in the celebration of the Eucharist; and it was the part of the deacons and deaconesses to carry the elements to those members of the Church who could not personally attend where the bishop presided; so we learn from Justin Martyr's Second Apology.

Page 174.—A treatise, not a note, would be required for bringing together the evidence which proves, what indeed none can well profess to doubt, namely—That, in the larger cities the Christians were numerous enough to constitute several congregations, and that yet (until

divided by heretics) they formed but one *Church*, subject to one administrative power, whether episcopal or presbyterian. The difference between a municipal church polity of this sort, and our modern congregationalism, such as we find it in our English cities and large towns, is *essential*, and of the highest practical importance. The reader will not expect, in a volume which touches the question of the different forms of church government only incidentally, the evidence that bears upon that question. The author's limits barely admit of his adducing a small sample of instances, pertinent to his proper subject.

APPENDIX TO SECTION V.

Page 194.—The ancient superstition concerning the sacraments, and some other observances, may justly be named as the initial point of Spiritual Despotism. It was on this stone that the hierarchy built its towering edifice. But who shall say when this superstition took the place of apostolic simplicity? The most ambiguous expressions (if indeed they are ambiguous) meet us in the earliest writers. These could not be here introduced with advantage: the author reserves what he may have to advance on this difficult and important subject to its proper place in a work he has in preparation, and which he will not forestal.

Page 197.—The long continued and anxious disagreements that arose in the African Church from the contumacy or the irregular forwardness of the confessors in granting bills of reconciliation to the lapsed, occupy a

prominent place in the writings of Cyprian, and are familiar to all readers of church history. These difficulties owed their origin, in great measure, to the exaggerations that had been indulged in concerning the merits of the martyrs; and then again, these exaggerations flowed from that sophistication of the Gospel which had early got ground. To do any damage to principal truths, is to plunge into unlimited practical errors and inconveniences. In Mr. Rose's translation of Neander, the English reader may see copious quotations from Cyprian, relating to this subject. On points of this sort, often adverted to in church histories, and well understood, it could subserve no good purpose here to enlarge.

Page 199.—From the expressions used by Tertullian, in speaking of the conventions of the Churches of Greece, *de Jejuniis*, c. 13, we should gather, that such representative assemblies were not very prevalent in his time. They grew more and more into use, as they were found to facilitate the exercise of irresponsible authority, on the part of the clergy. Ecclesiastical writers distinguish synods into four sorts, the first kind being those held by a bishop who summoned the bishops of the neighbouring cities, to assist him on some occasion of difficulty. The second kind was that of the metropolitans, at stated times convening all the bishops of their province. The third was that of patriarchs, assembling, in like manner, all of the episcopal order within their jurisdiction; and the fourth was what has usually been called œcumenic, or universal, in which the chiefs of the Christian world were drawn together, on extraordinary occasions, for the decision of urgent controversies. On some occasions, indeed, presbyters, deacons, and many of the people, obtained admission to synods; but it was with the bishops alone that the decision rested. 'Cum in unum Carthagini

convenissent, Kalend. Septembris, Episcopi plurimi ex provincia Africa, Numidia, Mauritania, cum presbyteris et diaconis, præsente etiam plebis maxima parte.'.... It was merely as spectators, or perhaps as serving to give importance to the church party in the view of the separatists, that the people gained admission on this occasion. 'Præsente plebe,' is a frequent phrase in the epistles of Cyprian; and it seems that he wished to sustain himself by the popular concurrence and favour; in truth, the fierce opposition he encountered from some of his clergy, was of a kind that rendered it necessary to court this aid. But we must by no means so interpret such expressions as to suppose that any substantial influence was accorded to the laity; or any power beyond that which a mob often exerts under the most absolute governments: the people had no *constitutional* power. In opening the council of Carthage (An. 256) Cyprian boldly and clearly affirms the independence of bishops one of another; but says nothing of the rights of the inferior clergy, or of the faithful at large. 'Neque enim quisquam nostrum Episcopum se Episcoporum constituit, aut tyrannico terrore ad obsequendi necessitatem collegos suos adigit; quando habeat omnis Episcopus pro licentia libertatis et potestatis suæ, arbitrium proprium; tamque judicari ab alio non possit, quam nec ipse potest judicare.' This is not altogether the language of apostles, or of apostolic men. The sentences of these eighty-seven prelates might very aptly be adduced in illustration of the high church style of the times—the times, not of state patronage, but of persecution.

Page 210.—The councils of Ancyra, of Neo-Cæsarea, and of Antioch, were, like those of Africa and the West, episcopal assemblies; and they exhibit the same practice of exclusion, in regard both to the inferior clergy and the people. The thirteenth canon of the council of

Ancyra may be adduced in proof of the breadth of the distinction, so early made, between the higher and lower clergy; a distinction which excluded even the country bishops from the prerogatives claimed by the bishops of cities. "It is not permitted to Chorepiscopi to ordain presbyters or deacons; nor indeed to the presbyters of cities to do so, without a license from their bishop, to that effect." These canons, throughout, imply a power on the part of the bishops nearly absolute. The phrase employed by Eusebius, in reference to the dignitaries assembled at the council of Nice, well designates the aristocratic constitution of that convention. "From all the Churches," says he, "of Europe, Africa, and Asia, there came together, τῶν τοῦ θεοῦ λειτουργῶν τὰ ἀκροθίνια. A bishop, absent on account of extreme age, was represented by his presbyters. A very great number of the inferior clergy, and even of the laity, followed in the trains of the bishops, and swelled the crowd that swarmed around the imperial palace, during the session of the council. Socrates tells us that there were in attendance upon the reverend fathers several laymen, διαλεκτικῆς ἐμπειροι, professionally employed, or, as we may say, *retained*, to plead on difficult points, or to assist in those incidental disputations that were always going on out of doors. It was, as we suppose, at one of these unauthentic conferences that, as this historian relates, after the learned wranglers had completely confounded, among themselves, all principles of piety and common sense, a simple hearted layman, one of the confessors, exclaimed, 'Christ and the apostles did not deliver to us dialectic and delusive subtilties, but γυμνὴν γνώμην to be kept in its purity by faith and good works.'

Page 214.—The uninterrupted transmission of the great articles of Christian faith in the mother Churches, throughout Christendom, is an argument that finds a

place in almost all the catholic controversial writings of the early centuries. There would be no end to adducing the instances. Irenæus especially insists upon this ground of authority; nor ought his appeal to the consistent and harmonious traditions of the principal Churches to be rejected as improper.—See contra Hæreses, lib. iii. cap. 3, and lib. iv. cap. 26. Origen, by no means a favourer of Church Despotism, calmly asserts the discriminative value of the traditional faith of the apostolic Churches:—'Servetur vero ecclesiastica prædicatio per successionis ordinem ab apostolis tradita; et usque ad præsens in ecclesiis permanens: illa sola credenda est veritas, quæ in nullo ab ecclesiastica et apostolica discordat traditione.' *Præf. de Principiis.* Tertullian strenuously makes the same appeal to the continued consistency of the mother Churches. Constat proinde omnem doctrinam, quæ cum illis Ecclesiis Apostolicis matricibus et originalibus fidei conspiret, veritati deputandum'.... and again: 'Hoc enim modo Ecclesiæ Apostolicæ census suos deferunt: sicut Smyrnæorum ecclesia Polycarpum ab Joanne conlocatum refert: sicut Romanorum, Clementem à Petro ordinatum itidem. perinde utique et ceteræ exhibent quos ab apostolis in episcopatum constitutos apostolici seminis traduces habeant. Confingant tale aliquid hæretici. There was reason and force in this challenge when advanced so early as the close of the second century, or the commencement of the third.

Page 231.—A substantial defence of Christianity might be grounded upon the temper exhibited in those admirable tracts which were addressed to the Roman authorities by the accomplished apologists of the faith, in the second and third centuries. The spirit and maxims therein displayed and professed, and not only professed, but practically adhered to, were immensely superior to any thing the world had hitherto seen, and ought to have

convinced the emperors and their advisers, that the new sect, if fairly treated, would have formed the best support of the decaying empire. In reading the learned, tranquil, manly, and yet meek, Apology of Athenagoras, and in recollecting to whom it was addressed, it is impossible not to feel that all truth and reason was on the one side, and an infatuated bigotry on the other. In equity, we should reject the philosophic pretensions of Antoninus; for what is that philosophy worth which is found to avail nothing with a prince, mildly entreated to protect thousands of his suffering and innocent subjects from horrid cruelties? The same spirit and principles meet us in the apologies of Tatian, Justin, Clement of Alexandria, Minutius Felix, and Origen; and indeed in all the early writers of this class; and manifestly their moderation was not that of individuals merely, but was the characteristic temper of the body. The author will here take leave to recommend strongly the perusal of these tracts to the intelligent reader; and especially if his faith in Christianity is unfixed. The later apologists approach, at times, a more sturdy style, and the common emotions of resentment are to be traced in many of the turgid orations pronounced at the tombs of the martyrs, after the triumph of Christianity. The orations of Gregory Nyssen, and of Basil, would furnish examples of this sort; or it might be enough to refer to Lactantius, *de Mortibus Persecutorum*. The exultation of the Christians over their fallen adversaries is indeed not more than is *natural*, but it is somewhat more than is *Christian-like*. Qui adversati erant Deo, jacent; qui templum sanctum everterant, ruina majori ceciderunt; qui justos excarnificaverant, cœlestibus plagis et cruciatibus mentis nocentes animos profuderunt. Distulerat enim pœnas eorum Deus, ut ederet in eos magna et mirabilia exempla.....

But no evidence more explicit concerning the feeling

of Christians, as a great and potent body in the state, can be adduced, than that which is contained in an often quoted passage of Tertullian's Apology, cap. 37, where he distinctly reminds his fellow-citizens of the power of the Christians—a power they would not employ, to right their own cause. There can be little doubt that this eloquent and vigorous apology rung in the ears of the Roman authorities, from the moment of its appearance, to the times of Diocletian; it might perhaps even serve to aggravate cruelties which were felt to be, in the highest degree, dangerous to the perpetrators, unless by such means the utter extinction of the sect could be effected.

To avoid retracing the same ground, or recurring to topics nearly allied, some references and illustrations which might have been appended to the fifth Section, are reserved to find a place in those attached to the sixth.

APPENDIX TO SECTION VI.

Page 243.—The author will not be misunderstood as speaking *literally* of the behaviour of Constantine at church. Nothing could be more reverential or decorous than his conduct on all occasions of frequenting public worship, of which Eusebius and Socrates report many instances.

Page 249.—Christianity had been declared, by Gallienus (An. 259,) a *religio licita*, and the Church had, in consequence of this decree, enjoyed a long repose. But Constantine's toleration, as it sprung from different

motives, and was understood to issue from his personal convictions in favour of Christianity, soon placed the Christians, throughout the empire, on ground they had never heretofore occupied. Constantine's decree of *universal* toleration, dated from Milan, as reported by Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. lib. x. cap. 5, is worthy of the most enlightened times: it is simple in expression, explicit, and ample. This same decree, which protects all subjects of the empire from molestation on account of their religion, be it what it may, naming especially the Christians, requires also a restitution of the property of the churches, which had been lately confiscated. "And moreover, as the said Christians are known to have possessed, not only the buildings in which they ordinarily assemble, but also other property, and which appertains not to individuals among them, but to the society, all such possessions, from the moment of the promulgation of this our decree, you will command to be restored, without question, to each corporation or church." So much in the true spirit of toleration is this decree, that the Romanist commentators upon Eusebius, instead of applauding, resent it, as an insult and an injury to the Church.—'What! shall the Catholic Church receive its liberties in common with Jews, Samaritans, and heretics?' In fact, this broad indulgence soon excited the jealousy of the emperor's episcopal advisers, and he was induced to issue decrees, contrary to his inclination and better judgment, but more to the taste of arrogant Churchmen. Throughout the history of Constantine's religious administration, we have to notice the distinction between his spontaneous measures, and those acts which sprung from the ecclesiastics to whose intemperance and bigotry he thought himself compelled to give way. In a subsequent decree the property of the churches is incidentally specified, as consisting in 'gardens and houses.' The moveable wealth of which they had been plundered it

was not possible to recover; yet it was, in part, replaced by the liberal donations of the emperor, and with these, and their actual funds, the Christians found themselves immediately able to construct spacious and splendid churches, in the stead of the humbler edifices that had been destroyed during the late persecutions.

Page 257.—We should by no means forget that, although Constantine went some way toward endowing the ministers of Christianity, by granting them certain permanent revenues, fruits, and customs, he left entirely unrestrained their command over the superstitious liberality of the people. There was, therefore, in this system, the cost of an establishment without its benefits. The Church was so much the more enriched; but the welfare of the community was not provided for. Beside the restitution of their corporate property, Constantine exempted the clergy from the liability they had hitherto stood under, as citizens, to discharge public offices. Eusebius, lib. x. cap. 7. This sort of exemption has been approved of as fit and necessary in most civilized countries.

Page 259.—When first summoned to surround the emperor, and to sit at the imperial table, many of the bishops, as we infer from an incidental expression of Eusebius, *de Vita Constant.* lib. i. cap. 42, were but poorly attired; they very quickly, however, learned to accommodate themselves to the usages of a court, and this, not in habiliments only, but in behaviour. Indeed, if we are to give credit to Socrates—esteemed a trustworthy writer, the deference exacted by the bishops from the emperor and his courtiers, was as great as the most arrogant hierarchs of later ages have demanded: for example, the emperor, in entering the hall of *his own palace*, where the Fathers of the Nicene council

were convened, did not presume to sit until he had received a nod from them, giving him permission to do so: he then meekly took his seat, on a golden stool, as Eusebius tells us, placed in the open space around which the bishops were arranged. Τοσαύτη τὶς εὐλάβεια καὶ αἰδῶς τῶν ανδρῶν, τον βασιλέα κατεῖχεν.

Page 261.—Numberless are the monastic rules and canons directed to the important object of securing to religious houses the personal effects of those who entered them. For a monk to retain possession even of a shilling, as private property, was deemed one of the most serious crimes of which he could be guilty. A curious enactment, on this subject, is found among the Decretals of Gregory IX. A monk retaining private property, without the special permission of his abbot (which was in certain cases granted) was not to receive Christian burial: or, if the discovery were afterwards made of his having died possessed of clandestine effects, exhumation was to take place — provided it could be done without causing great public scandal; and his remains cast forth from the sacred precincts: that is to say, adds the commentator, if the bones of the guilty brother can be distinguished from those of others. Decret. lib. iii. tit. 35. But the same practice and principle is met with in the monastic writers of a much earlier time. The text and profession of the system was, μοναχὸς ὁ ἐν τῇ γῇ κτῆμα ζητῶν, μοναχὸς οὐκ ἔτιν. But though the *monk* must be a pauper, the *fraternity* might become as wealthy as it pleased; such are the subterfuges of spurious piety! The epistles of Gregory I. contain several allusions to the wills of monks; and it seems that different usages obtained in the different orders in this respect; some demanding the absolute surrender of all personal property, while others allowed wealthy brethren to retain and dispose of their fortunes.

This same Pope grants express license to certain abbots to bequeath their private property, Epist. *22*, and in other cases authenticates the surrender of a monk's property to the monastery, lest the grant should be called in question by his lawful heirs. From the Justinian code, it appears that monks, in the sixth century, were generally allowed to dispose of their effects by will. Jerome approves the practice observed in the monasteries of Egypt, of burying, with a monk, any little savings he might have made from the product of his labours;—according to that Scripture, "Thy money perish with thee." *Epist. ad Eustochium.* To the same effect Basil; *Constitutiones Monasticæ.*

Page 263.—Nothing that can be deemed important, either in a religious or ecclesiastical sense, appears to be connected with those adjustments of Church polity which Constantine effected. He found the Christian world already meted out under three or four supremacies; and he only brought these existing governments into convenient conformity with the new arrangements which he established in the civil constitution of the empire. His error was, the not discerning the dangerous ambition of the Roman pontiff, or not providing against what he might have foreseen would be the course of events, when the bishop of Rome was left lord of Italy and the Western Church. Whether a complex hierarchical system be good or bad, it was fully established and digested, at the time of the imperial conversion. This fact there can be no need to support by formal evidence; the proof of it meets us every where. Let the reader look through the Apostolic Constitutions.

Page 266.—It is pretty certain that Constantine would gladly have left to the chiefs of the Church the control of all spiritual affairs; but the endless disagreements

that prevailed among them, and in the course of which he was appealed to, sometimes by the weaker, and sometimes by the stronger party, involved him unavoidably in controversies and disputes of all kinds, and left him no liberty to observe that line which at first he had marked out for himself. The feuds of the clergy, although he could not but see that they threw power into his hands, gave him sincere uneasiness; and his earnest remonstrances with them, on this head, put it beyond reasonable doubt that his desire of concord and unity prevailed altogether over his love of influence. Gladly would he have embraced the respectable separatists of the time in the arrangements which he laboured to bring about; but his good intentions were frustrated, as well by the unyielding tempers of the non-conformists, as by the haughtiness of the Catholic bishops. We learn from Socrates, lib. i. cap. 10, that, with the view of comprehending, if possible, the existing parties, the emperor summoned Acesius, a Novatian bishop, to the council of Nice, with whom he amicably conferred. 'Why,' asked the emperor, 'do you separate yourself from the communion of the Church?' Acesius replied by stating the origin and the grounds of the Novatian dissent, upon hearing which Constantine exclaimed—'Good man, set a ladder then, and climb up to heaven alone.' Again and again, in reading the history of the times, we have to regret that the imperial nursing father of the Church did not oftener lean upon his own sound judgment and honest intentions, rather than yield to the wishes of his ecclesiastical advisers. On one occasion, nothing but the vigorous good sense of A MONK—Paphnutius, saved the Church from a fanatical attempt of the bishops to impose celibacy upon the clergy. This interposition, says the historian, Socrates, was the more remarkable, because Paphnutius himself had, from his youth, maintained the strictest continence. Whatever opinion we

may form, if indeed we should attempt to form any, of the personal character of Constantine, or of his religious sentiments, it is unwarrantable to call in question the sincerity of his professions, in relation to the religious welfare of the empire. He regarded, with awe, the Divine Providence, in the course of public affairs: he devoutly wished to propitiate the Divine favour on behalf of the State: he felt that Christianity was the religion of order and humanity, and he earnestly desired to see it every where prevalent. The candid reader of Eusebius and Socrates, while he may disallow certain measures, and while he makes a due deduction from the encomiums of partial writers, will receive, altogether, a favourable impression of the conduct of this first Christian prince.

Page 270.—. . . . 'donec sub Constantino Imperatore,' says Jerome, after mentioning the licentious rites of the Grecian worship, 'Christi evangelio coruscante, et infidelitas universarum gentium, et turpetudo deleta est.' *Comment. in Esaiam, cap. 2.* If this reformation be here too largely stated, it was nevertheless very great and extensive, and attended with the highest benefits to the community. So vast a revolution could not however have been effected without the most vigorous and peremptory measures. Much as the minds of men, in that age, were inclined to consider visible prosperity, and especially if it attended a prince or public person through life, as an indication of the Divine favour to the individual, a strong impression, corroborative of the Christian doctrine, must have been made upon the Roman world, by the mere fact of the impunity with which the first Christian emperor suppressed the worship of the gods, and put contempt upon their ministers. It was manifest that the gods were destitute of power to avenge themselves upon this, their bold enemy. Nay, in splendour,

happy success, and long continued tranquillity, Constantine greatly surpassed any of his predecessors. Augustine, *de Civitate Dei*, appeals to the instance, on this very ground. Nam bonus Deus, ne homines qui eum crederent propter æternam vitam colendum, hos sublimitates et regna terrena existimarent posse neminem consequi, nisi dæmonibus supplicet, quod hi spiritus in talibus multum valerent, Constantinum imperatorem non supplicantem dæmonibus, sed ipsum verum Deum colentem, tantis terrenis implevit muneribus, quanta optare nullus auderet.... Diu imperavit, universum orbem Romanum unus Augustus tenuit et defendit: in administrandis et gerendis bellis victoriosissimus fuit; in tyrannis opprimendis per omnia prosperatus est; grandævus ægritudine et senectute defunctus est, filiis imperantes reliquit. Lib. v. cap. 25. Eusebius more than once advances the same argument, which, from the frequency with which it was employed, we may infer to have been found efficacious. 'With loud voice,' in the instance of the emperor, 'the true God spake to all men, calling upon them to acknowledge him as the only God, and to turn away from those that were no gods.' We may well suppose that Constantine was himself confirmed in his faith by his own prosperity, and was, perhaps, in the same manner emboldened to assail the ancient superstitions of the empire with the more vigour. Sentiments of this sort appear in several of his epistles and speeches, as reported by Eusebius, *De Vita Constantin.* lib. ii. cap. 24, 25, *et passim.*

.....Neque ab idololatriæ distare hæreses, quum et auctoris et operis ejusdem sint, cujus et idololatria, says Tertullian; and the church writers of the age of Constantine expressly affirm heresy and schism to be greater evils than polytheism. It is no wonder, therefore, that the severities resorted to for the suppression of the latter should, without scruple, have been directed against the

former; yet it was chiefly in the following reigns that extreme coercive measures against either idolatry or heresy, were employed. Constantine's mode of proceeding in suppressing the pagan worship is described by his biographer; *Vita*, lib. iii. cap. 54, *et seq.* Against heretics and schismatics he issued reproofs, vehement sometimes in style, but he seldom went further than to prohibit their conventicles, and to confiscate their oratories or chapels to the Catholic Church. *Vita*, lib. iii. cap. 65. The language attributed to the emperor in these instances indicates, as we think, an inward conflict between the mildness and moderation of his personal dispositions, and his sense of duty, as suggested to him by his episcopal advisers. His successors were far less scrupulous.

Page 273.—The writings of Augustine and of Chrysostom, not to mention others, abound in passages attesting the immensity of the cares and labours of a judicial kind, in which a bishop was involved, as arbitrator of secular interests; (see especially Chrysostom, de Sacerdotio, lib. iii.) nor was this evil of recent origin: as a *custom* it takes its date from the apostolic times; as an *evil*, from the age in which worldly ambition had generally tainted the minds of the clergy; and this happened long before the political triumph of Christianity. On the subject of episcopal jurisdiction, what it included, and in what manner exercised, in the third and fourth centuries, the Apostolic Constitutions afford various information: the second book relates chiefly to this part of the bishop's duties, and may be referred to as sufficient evidence of the extent of the authority vested in him, and of the almost unlimited influence which, as arbitrator and judge, he exercised. The fact not being matter of dispute, to adduce quotations would serve no useful purpose. The English reader may find, in Hallam's Middle Ages, chap. vii. a concise account of this branch of ecclesiastical power.

Page 280.—The third oration of Gregory Nazianzen, entitled στηλιτευτικός, and the fourth, exhaust the eloquence of that accomplished churchman, and indeed seem to spend all the resources of the copious language he employed in the expression of indignant sentiments. But though the Greeks must bear the palm as orators, it is to the Latin Fathers we must look for the indications of the real ascendency of the Church, in the fourth century. The Greeks were the best preachers, orators, and writers; but the Latins were the best and the boldest promoters of church authority. Among these, Ambrose of Milan holds no mean place; it is from his writings that we may the most readily derive an idea of the ecclesiastical system, practices, and spirit of his time; and especially from his epistles.

APPENDIX TO SECTION VII.

In seeking for evidence concerning the spirit and practices of the Romish Despotism, we should observe two rules, both clearly equitable and necessary; the first is to look to the pages of those writers only who have occupied high stations in the Church, and whose decisions are its law; and the second is to confine ourselves to those times during which the Church was in her prosperity, and enjoyed an unrestricted authority. The breaking out of the Reformation gave a new, and an exasperated character to all the acts and expressions of the Papacy. From that time forward the Church spoke in reference to, or in tacit recollection of, her new and formidable adversaries. She was no longer purely spontaneous. The difference of style and feeling

occasioned by the Lutheran schism, is very clearly perceptible in the Romanist writers of all classes; for while the bold and intemperate are far more extravagant and impudent than were their predecessors of the same stamp, the reasonable, the conciliatory, and the philosophic, labour with the utmost diligence and ingenuity to soften the features of the Romish tyranny, to excuse its intolerance, to recommend, on general grounds, its superstitions, and to bring it, as far as possible, into accordance with the spirit of Christianity, and with the feelings and usages of modern times. But as we are bound, in fairness, to reject the exaggerated Romanism of the one class of modern writers, so should we pass by, as unauthentic and spurious, the novel liberality, and the spirituality of the other. We do not ask Fenelon, or Pascal, or the Jansenists, or Dr. Doyle, or Mr. Butler, what Romanism is, any more than we put that question to certain infamous Spanish Jesuits of the seventeenth century; but turn to the popes and the authentic doctors of the middle ages. The principles avowed by these high authorities, and the practices founded upon those principles, are consistent one with another; are necessary parts of the great ecclesiastical theory; and are such as must, in every age, be professed and followed by the Romish Church, where she enjoys full liberty, and is not compelled to adapt herself to political necessities. Protestantism annihilated, and princes once more brought down to their place, as the obedient sons and champions of the Church, and then this Church would be, and *must be*, the very same in spirit and in practice that it was in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. In truth a modern catholic country, as for example, Spain, Ireland, or Belgium, would altogether gain, as much as it would lose, in exchanging *infra*-Lutheran, for *supra*-Lutheran Catholicism. That which makes modern popery more tolerable, and in some respects less pernicious to a people

than ancient popery was, is precisely that admixture of better notions which it has furtively obtained from Protestantism. But all such mitigations and corrections the consistent Romanist must regard as adulterations, and must wish to exclude and repel. The Romish Church can never admit the maxim—'fas est ab hoste doceri.'

The author will now present to the reader some few promiscuous passages from authors who, if any, are to be deemed *authorities* in Romanism—Romanism in its best times. We take three illustrious churchmen, contemporaries, and the most noted and honoured of the papal champions; two of them popes, and one the spiritual father of a pope, namely, Innocent III., Gregory IX., and St. Bernard. (In quoting the Epistles of Innocent III., the author takes the Paris edition, 1682, of S. Baluzius: for Gregory IX. — the Decretals, Leyden, 1584, ad exemplar Romanum diligenter recognitæ: for St. Bernard—Mabillon's edition, Paris, 1690.)

The expositors of prophetic symbols have ordinarily assumed that the secular authority was typified by the sun, and the ecclesiastical by the moon; but Innocent III. reverses these emblems. Sicut universitatis conditor Deus duo magna luminaria in firmamento cœli constituit, luminare majus, ut præesset diei, et luminare minus, ut nocti præesset; sic ad firmamentum universalis Ecclesiæ, quæ cœli nomine nuncupatur, duas magnas instituit dignitates, majorem, quæ quasi diebus animabus præesset, et minorem, quæ quasi noctibus præesset corporibus: quæ sunt pontificalis auctoritas, et regalis potestas. Porro sicut luna lumen suum a sole sortitur, quæ re vera minor est illo quantitate simul et qualitate, situ pariter et effectu; sic regalis potestas ab auctoritate pontificali suæ sortitur dignitatis splendorem; cujus conspectui quanto magis inhæret, tanto minori lumine decoratur, et quo plus ab ejus elongatur aspectu, eò plus proficit in splendore. Utaque verò protestas sive pri-

matus sedem in Italia meruit obtinere, quæ dispositione divina super universas provincias obtinuit principatum. Et ideo licèt ad universas provincias nostræ provisionis aciem extendere debeamus, specialiter tamen Italiæ paterna nos convenit solicitudine providere, in qua Christianæ religionis fundamentum extitit, et per apostolicæ sedis primatum sacerdotii simul et regni præminet principatus.—Tom. i. p. 235.

This point of the superiority of the sacerdotal and pontifical dignity, as compared with the secular and regal, this pope urges in a similar style upon the Emperor Alexius, who had imposed certain humiliations upon the patriarch and clergy of Constantinople, and had presumed to make clerical persons amenable to the civil authority. Quod autem sequitur (1 Peter ii. 13) *Regi tanquam præcellenti*, non negamus quin præcellat in temporalibus Imperator, illis dumtaxat qui ab illo recipiunt temporalia. Sed Pontifex in spiritualibus antecellit, quæ tanto sunt temporalibus digniora quanto corpori est anima præferenda. It was thus that, on the ground of the infinite superiority of religious interests, the Papacy reared its claim to exercise a paramount authority on earth, and actually trampled on the neck of kings. Innocent goes on to convict Alexius of his error in presuming to touch clerical criminals with the secular sword; and his method of expounding Scripture might make one believe that he had learned theology in the school of the Rabbis. Quod autem sequitur *ad vindictum malefactorum, laudem vero bonorum*, intelligendum non est quod Rex vel Imperator super *omnes* et bonos et malos potestatem acceperit, sed in eos solummodo qui utentes gladio, ejus sunt jurisdictioni commissi, juxta quod veritas ait: omnes qui acceperint gladium, gladio peribunt. Non enim potest aut debet quisquam servum alterius judicare, cùm servus suo domino, secundùm Apostolum, stet aut cadat. Ad id etiam induxisti quòd licèt Moses et Aaron secundùm

carnem fratres extiterint, &c.... Dictum est etiam in lege divina; *Diis non detrahes, et principem populi tui non maledices.* Quæ Sacerdotes Regibus anteponens, istos DEOS et illos *principes* appelavit. Præterea nosse debueras quod fecit Deus duo;—and here follows the same illustration, as above, drawn from the two celestial luminaries.... Hoc autem si prudenter attenderit imperatoria celsitudo, non faceret aut permitteret venerabilem fratrem Patriarcham Constantinopolitanum, magnum quidem et honorabile membrum Ecclesiæ, juxta scabellum pedum tuorum in sinistra parte sedere, cùm alii Reges et Principes Archiepiscopis et Episcopis suis, sicut debent, reverenter assurgant, et eis juxta se honorabilem sedem assignent. Nam et piissimus Constantinus quantum honoris exhibuerit Sacerdotibus, tua sicut credimus prudentia non ignorat. This is much in the style in which Ambrose of Milan was wont to school Theodosius. We may mention, in illustration of the grievance of which, as it seems, the Constantinopolitan Patriarch had complained, that the illuminated Greek codices of the tenth and following centuries, not unfrequently represent the emperor on his throne, receiving, with condescension, a copy of the book from a bishop or presbyter, who reverentially inclines his head in offering it to the imperial hand. This sort of obeisance and submission, on the part of the clergy towards monarchs, was found only in the eastern empire; or very rarely in the west.

Innocent, who thus asserts the rights of his brother of Constantinople, when the general credit of the priesthood is involved, vehemently assails the same brother on the point of the supremacy of Rome, and calls upon him, as he values his salvation, to submit to the chair of St. Peter. So in his letter (353) to the Greek emperor, and in the one which follows to the patriarch. Reprobata quondam propter ingratitudinis vitium perfidia Judæorum, et oblato synagogæ (quia non cognovit tempus visitationis suæ)

libello repudii, unam sibi Ecclesiam ex gentibus congregatam, non habentem maculam neque rugam, Dominus noster elegit, juxta quod legitur in Canticis Canticorum, *Una est electa mea, sponsa mea, immaculata mea*..... Hoc autem Græcorum populus non attendens, aliam sibi confinxit Ecclesiam (si tamen quæ præter unam est, Ecclesia sit dicenda) et ab Apostolicæ sedis unitate recessit, nec constitutionem Domini nec Petri magisterium imitatus, et inconsutilem vestem Domini, cui crucifixorum manus in aliarum vestium divisione pepercit, scindere usque hodie, licèt frustra, conatur; non attendens quod una tantùm extitit arca, intra quam sub uno rectore quicunque fuerunt, leguntur in cataclismo salvati: qui autem extra ipsam inventi sunt, omnes in diluvio perierunt. Quia igitur id in scandalum nostrum et fidei Christianæ redundat dispendium, nec jam possumus vitare clamores Ecclesiæ generalis quæ nos et prædecessores nostros negligentiæ ac tarditatis redarguit, monemus frat. tuam et exhor. in Domino, per Apostolica tibi scripta mandantes, quatenus omnimodam solicitudinem et efficacem operam interponas, ut Græcorum universitas redeat ad Ecclesiæ unitatem, et ad matrem filia revertata, et fiat juxta verbum Domini unum ovile, et unus Pastor..... To all this the patriarch replies with spirit and humility:—Et indulge mihi, sacerrime Papa, si nunc primò hunc patriarchalem sacrum thronum me ascendentem, nondum de tali hoc dubitatione diligentem solutionem addiscere accidit.... But his argument, which indeed exhibits much good sense, is met by Innocent with manifold reasons, of which the following may serve as a specimen;—Petro non solùm universam Ecclesiam "sed totum reliquit seculum gubernandum. Quod ex eo etiam evidenter apparet, quia cum Dominus apparuisset in littore discipulis navigantibus, sciens Petrus quòd. Dominus esset, se misit in mare, ac aliis navigio venientibus, ipse sine beneficio navis ad Dominum

festinavit. Cùm enim mare mundum designet, juxta verbum Psalmistæ dicentis, *Hoc mare magnum et spatiosum, illic reptilia quorum non est numerus;* per hoc quòd Petrus se misit in mare, priviligium expressit pontificii singularis, per quod UNIVERSUM ORBEM susceperat gubernandum; ceteris Apostolis ut vehiculo navis contentis, cùm nulli eorum universus fuerit orbis commissus, sed singulis singulæ provinciæ vel Ecclesiæ potiùs deputatæ. Iterum etiam ut se unicum Christi Vicarium designaret, ad Dominum super aquas maris mirabiliter ambulantem et ipse super aquas maris mirabiliter ambulavit. Nam cùm aquæ multæ sint populi multi, congregationes que aquarum sint maria, per hoc quod, Petrus super aquas maris incessit, super universos populos se potestatem accepiisse monstravit.... Sanè cum per navem Petri Ecclesia figuretur, tunc Petrus juxta præceptum dominicum navim duxit in altùm, laxans prædicationis retia in capturam, cùm ibi posuit Ecclesiæ principatum ubi vigebat secularis potentiæ altitudo et imperialis monarchia residebat, cui ferè singulæ nationes sicut flumina mari tributa solvebant certis temporibus constituta. Much of the same sort follows; and the paternal epistle ends with a peremptory and threatening summons, requiring the Constantinopolitan patriarch to attend a general council, to be holden at Rome, and there to do homage to St. Peter's chair.

Frivolous as we must think the arguments of Innocent, his conclusions were full of a tremendous meaning, and while he spoke as a lamb, he ruled the world as a lion. Indeed, apart from the comment which history furnishes upon documents of this sort, one might imagine some of these haughty and sanguinary pontiffs to have been patterns of humility and gentleness. Even those bulls and edicts which, in their effect, deluged kingdoms with blood, are moderate in language, and breathe a placid and scriptural fervour. In making our acquaintance

with certain illustrious and zealous churchmen, *first*, through the medium of history, and afterwards by consulting their extant writings, a lively surprise is felt in finding that men, whose hands we know to have reeked blood, were, in their epistles and their homilies, so honey-mouthed and saint-like. Every reader of history knows what practical interpretation Innocent put upon the simple fact of Peter's leaving his fishing-tackle and dragging his boat ashore, and that it meant nothing less than that his successors, turning away from purely spiritual cares, might make themselves universal lords of the bodies as well as souls of men. This absolute *secular* sovereignty is an essential element of the papal theory. It is only as universal despot that the Vicar of Christ can fulfil his functions, and effectively rule the household of faith. Modern concessions on this point are only so many inconsistencies, that must be redeemed and obliterated when the time comes for building up anew the tabernacle of St. Peter.

Innocent III. well knew that, although in some of his measures he might go beyond the line of his predecessors, he did not a whit transgress in principle and doctrine what they had uniformly professed. The unbounded and absolutely irresponsible authority of the pope had, centuries before, been maintained in the most explicit terms. Culpas (Papæ) redarguere præsumit mortalium nullus; quia cunctos ipse judicaturus à nemine est judicandus. *Boniface the Martyr.* Et ex annalibus Francorum, ex Anastasio, et ex sacris ritibus Romanæ Ecclesiæ proditum est in concione quam Romæ convocavit Carolus Magnus, Rex Galliarum, ad examinanda objecta in Leonem Pontificem Maximum, Archiepiscopos, Episcopos, et Abbates unanimiter dixisse: nos sedem Apostolicam, quæ est caput omnium Dei Ecclesiarum, judicare non audemus: nam ab ipsa omnes et vicario suo judicamur; ipsa autem à nemine judicatur.

In his procedens, (that is in gems and silks,) says St. Bernard, addressing his pontifical son and pupil, Eugene III., tectus auro, vectus equo albo, stipatus milite, circumstrependibus septus ministris, successisti non Petro, sed Constantino. Consulo toleranda pro tempore, non affectanda pro debito. Ad ea te potius incito quorum te scio debitorem. Etsi purpuratus, etsi deauratus incedens, non est tamen quod horreas operam curamve pastoralem pastoris, non est quod erubesces evangelium. Quamquam si volens evangelizes, inter apostolos quidem etiam gloria est tibi. Evangelizare pascere est. Fac opus evangelistæ et pastoris opus implesti. Dracones, inquis, me mones pascere et scorpiones, non oves; propter hoc, inquam magis aggredere eos; sed verbo, non ferro. Quid tu denuo usurpare gladium tentes, quem semel jussus es ponere in vaginam? Quem tamen qui tuum negat, non satis mihi videtur attendere verbum Domini dicentis; converte gladium tuum in vaginam. Tuus ergo et ipse, *tuo forsitan nutu; et si non tua manu* evaginandus. Alioquin si nullo modo ad te pertineret, et is dicentibus apostolis; ecce gladii duæ hic; non respondissit Dominus; *Satis est;* sed, *nimis est.* Uterque ergo Ecclesiæ et spiritualis scilicet gladius, et materialis, sed is quidem pro Ecclesia; ille vero et ab Ecclesia exerendus est. Ille sacerdotis; is militis manu; sed sane ad nutum sacerdotis, &c.—*De Consideratione.*

Here was this seraphic monk, and we must believe him to have been a good man, giving warrant for that nod at which kings and barons drew their swords—the sword of the Church, and which was not to be sheathed until rivers of blood had sodden the soil, both of the East and the West. The horrors which history has connected with the pontificate of Innocent being put out of view, one might be amused with the ingenuity of his perversions of Scripture. The severities put in force against the French heretics having compelled them to conceal

their Bibles and their meetings, with the utmost care, this pope enjoins the clergy of the infected districts to beware of such *works of darkness*. The study of holy Scripture is indeed, he says, in itself commendable; but not the profanation of Scripture by its coming into the hands of the common people;—'it was not for *beasts* to touch the mount of God.' Unde recte fuit olim in lege divina statutum ut bestia quæ montem tetigerat, lapidetur; ne videlicet simplex et indoctus præsumat ad sublimitatem Scripturæ sacræ pertingere, vel eam aliis prædicare. It appears that certain of these heretics (Albigenses) having got possession of the Scriptures in their own tongue, and become familiar with apostolic Christianity, had presumed to hold disputations with some of the catholic clergy, and had confounded these unlearned clerks. This was an evil not to be endured. Non est tamen simplicibus sacerdotibus etiam a scholasticis detrahendum, cùm in eis sacerdotale ministerium debeat honorari. Propter quod Dominus in lege præcepit, Diis non detrahes, sacerdotes intelligens, qui propter excellentiam ordinis et officii dignitatem deorum nomine nuncupantur. These and other evils having been mentioned and reproved, Innocent lovingly entreats those to whom he writes to forsake all such false ways, and concludes—Quia nisi correctionem nostram et admonitionem paternam receperitis humiliter et devotè, nos, post oleum infundemus et vinum, severitatem ecclesiasticum apponentes; ut qui noluerint obedire spontanei, discant acquiescere vel inviti.—Tom. i. p. 434.

The epistle which follows the one just quoted, exhibits far more moderation than our *historical* notion of this pontiff would lead us to expect; indeed, this comparative mildness, as we have already said, pervades most of his letters. It is to the fundamental principle and theory of the Papacy, rather than to the individual ferocity of popes, that we are to attribute the sanguinary measures

by which, from age to age, it has been sustained. Very many of these epistles, which, in fact, carried fire and sword into provinces, contain little but what might be looked for in the pastoral advices of some mild and enlightened Irish Catholic bishop of the present day. A reference to these epistles, and to other writings of the same class, is to be made, not because we may thence draw startling and characteristic specimens of turgid comminations and thundering anathemas; but rather on account of the suavity, the calmness, and the paternal dignity and solicitude which they display. Read the melancholy story of Raymond, Count of Toulouse, and then turn to the epistles of Innocent III., and from a comparison of the one with the other, learn what is that system which, while it breathes soft whispers of love, slips the dogs of cruelty to gorge on human flesh.

Nevertheless, when the occasion was urgent, Innocent so expressed his meaning as to leave no room to doubt what were his intentions. The reader may take a specimen of this sort; it occurs in the epistle that was carried by Rainerius and Guido to the bishop and nobles of Languedoc. Inter quos (hæreticos) in provincia vestra quosdam, qui Valdenses, Catari, et Paterini dicuntur, et alios quoslibet quibuscunque nominibus appellatos, in tantum jam accepimus pullulasse, ut innumeros populos sui erroris laqueis inetierint, et fermento corruperint falsitatis. Cùm igitur ad capiendas hujusmodi vulpes parvulas, quæ demoliuntur vineam Domini Sabaoth, species quidem habentes diversas, sed caudas ad invicem colligatas, quia de vanitate conveniunt in id ipsum, ut verga Moysi maleficorium phantasmata devoret, dilectum filium fratrem, Rainerium, virum probatæ vitæ et conversationis honestæ, potentem divino munere in opere et sermone, ac cum eo dilectum filium fratrem Guidonem, virum Deum timentem, et studentem operibus charitatis, ad partes ipsas duxerimus destinandos; frater-

nitati vestræ per apostolica scripta mandamus, et districtè præcipimus quatenus eos benigno recipientes et tractantes affectu, taliter eis contra hæreticos assistatis, ut per ipsos ab errore viæ suæ revocentur ad Dominum; et si qui fortè converti non poterant, ne pars syncera trahatur, de vestris finibus excludantur; ut terra vestra hujusmodi ministris Sathanæ penitùs effugatis, verbum prædicationis vestræ gratanter recipiat, et erit fructum temporibus suis .... Ad hæc, nobilibus viris Principibus, Comitibus, et universis Baronibus et Magnatibus in vestra provincia constitutis præcipiendo mandamus, et in remissionem injungimus peccatorum, ut ipsos benignè recipientes pariter et devotè, eis contra hæreticos tam viriliter et potenter assistant, ut ad vindictam malefactorum, laudem verò bonorum, potestatem sibi traditam probentur laudabiliter, exercere, et si qui hæreticorum ab errore suo commoniti noluerint resipiscere, postquam per prædictum fratrem Rainerium fuerint excommunicationis sententia innodati, eorum bona confiscent, et de terra sua proscribant. Et si post interdictum ejus in terra ipsorum præsumpserint commorari, gravius animadvertant in eos, sicut decet Principes Christianos, ut arca fœderis præcedente cum tubis, ac Josue sequente cum populis, utrisque pariter conclamantibus, muri corruant Jericho, fiatque perpetuum anathema; ita quòd si quis de illo vel regulam auream furari præsumpserit, cum Achan filio Carmi lapidibus obruatur. Dedimus autem dicto fratri R. liberam facultatem ut eos ad id per excommunicationis sententiam et interdictum terræ appellatione remota compellat: nec volumus ipsos ægrè ferre aliquatenus vel molestè si eos ad id exequendum tam distinctè compelli præcipimus, cùm ad nil amplius intendamus uti severitatis judicio, quàm ad exterpandos hæreticos qui non nobis substantiam temporalem sed spiritualem vitam surripere moliuntur. Nam qui fidem adimit, vitam furatur. Justus enim ex fide vivit.—Tom. i. p. 51.

This is the genuine logic of the Romish Church, and from which it can never depart without flagrant inconsistency. "The just shall live by faith;" to rob a people, then, of their faith, is to rob them of life—life eternal; and these plunderers and destroyers of souls, the heretics, ought, without mercy, to be extirpated. Nor the heretics themselves only, but whoever favours, shelters, or pities them. Contra defensores, receptatores, fautores, et credentes hæreticorum, Innocent promulgates his edict of excommunication, confiscation, banishment, deprivation; declaring all such hearers or receivers of heretics to be incapable of public offices, incompetent to bequeath their effects, or to inherit, to give evidence in courts, or to sue others for their right, or to defend themselves from wrong or violence. Pity shown to such was treason against the Lord; cùm longè sit gravius æternam quàm temporalem lædere majestatem. The modern apologists of the Papacy, who pretend that these severities belonged to the times, not to the system, should show that they are inconsistent with that system, and that the doctrines advanced in the worst ages, in relation to the enemies of the Church, have not been professed uniformly by the Church. The contrary is most certainly true; for there is nothing in the Epistles of Innocent III., which may not be sustained by the language of all eminent churchmen of the seven or eight preceding centuries.

The Decretals of Gregory IX. embody the principles of the Papacy, and the decisions of the most eminent of the pontiffs; and they present, in a compact form, as well the spirit as the usages of the Romish Church, such as it was in its brightest era. The very words of Augustine, and other distinguished fathers, of Leo I., Gregory I., Gregory VII., and of the Urbans, Adrians, and Innocents, are here adopted and incorporated, so as to form a consistent mass of authoritative rules, for the

guidance of the Church Universal. It is to this collection, much rather than to the writings of modern Romanists, that we should look for the IDEA of the papal superstition. These Decretals exhibit the Christianity of Europe, such as it was from the time of the withdrawment of the Imperial court from Italy, until the breaking out of the Lutheran Reformation; and such as it is in all ages and countries, and must be while its fundamental principles are adhered to. Romish Christianity has stooped to conquer in India, it has stooped in China, it has stooped in France, and it stoops in Ireland; but Romish Christianity is itself unaltered and unalterable: nothing can be more idle than to talk of it as essentially amended.

A very few specimens from the massive volume of the Decretals may be enough for the reader; and we may take them promiscuously.

Towards Saracens and Jews, the Church often showed a degree of tenderness; and professed that their error was far less virulent than that of Christian heretics. The Decretals of Gregory contain many provisions in favour of the Jews, and in fact secure to them what might be called—toleration. Heretics were to be dealt with in a different manner. Excommunicamus itaque, et anathematizamus omnem hæresim, extollentem se adversus hanc sanctam, orthodoxam et catholicam fidem, quam superius exposuimus; condemnantes hæreticos universos, quibuscunque nominibus censeantur; facies quidem diversas habentes, sed caudas ad invicem colligatas, quia de vanitate conveniunt in id ipsum. This general anathema is, under the same head (Titulus VII. *de Hæreticis*) drawn out and expounded, and applied to various cases and occasions, so as best to secure the purgation of infected districts. The maxims laid down at the commencement are such as these—Dubius in fide, infidelis est. Nec eis omnino credendum est qui fidem veritatis ignorant:

and, Qui alios, cum potest, ab errore non revocat, seipsum errore demonstrat: and, Qui autem inventi fuerint sola suspicione notabiles, nisi juxta considerationem suspicionis qualitatem personæ, propriam innocentiam congrua purgatione monstraverint, anathematis gladio feriantur, et usque ad satisfactionem condignam ab omnibus evitentur; ita quod si per annum in excommunicatione perstiterint, ex tunc velut hæretici condemnentur: it is moreover as a principle affirmed that, Dominus Papa principem secularem deponere potest, propter hæresim.

This power of deposing kings may now be disclaimed; but the argument by which, in an epistle to the French king, Innocent maintains it, involves no assumption whatever which the consistent Romanist can disown. The infinite importance of religious interests, and the universal pastoral authority of the pope, and the sacred obligation he is under to uphold and preserve the true faith, at whatever cost or peril, leave him at no liberty to do otherwise than depose (if he has the power to do so) an heretical prince. To refrain from exerting this power would be to partake of the sin, and to share the damnation of the heretic. If popes do not now depose heretical princes, it is for the simple reason that heretical princes will not now be so deposed.

These Decretals reject indignantly the allegation that popes are subject, in any sense, to the decrees of councils: — Quasi Romanæ Ecclesiæ legem concilia ulla præfixerint: cum omnia concilia per Romanæ Ecclesiæ auctoritatem et facta sint, et robur acceperint, et in eorum statutis Romani Pontificis patenter excipiatur auctoritas: and in the same style they exclude the interference of princes in church affairs. Porro cum laicis nulla sit de spiritualibus concedendi vel disponendi facultas; Imperialis concessio quantumcunque generaliter fiat, neminem potest à solutione decimarum eximere, quæ divina constitutione debentur. After the anointing of bishops at

their consecration, has been described, and the reasons and the scriptural authority of every part of the ceremony has been given, it is added—Unde in Veteri Testamento non solum ungebatur sacerdos, sed etiam rex et propheta: sicut in libro Regum, Dominus præcepit Heliæ.... Sed ubi Jesus Nazarenus (quem unxit Deus Spiritu Sancto, sicut in Actibus Apostolorum legitur) unctus est oleo pietatis, præ consortibus suis, qui secundum Apostolum est caput Ecclesiæ, quæ est corpus ipsius, principis unctio à capite ad brachium est translata; ut princeps extunc ungatur non in capite, sed in brachio, sive humero, vel in armo: in quibus principatus congruè designatur, juxta illud quod legitur: factus est principatus super humerum ejus, &c. Ad quod etiam significandum Samuel fecit poni armum ante Saul, cui dederat locum in capite ante eos, qui fuerunt invitati. In capite vero pontificis sacramentalis est delibutio conservata: quia personam capitis in pontificali officio repræsentat. Refert autem inter pontificis et principis unctionem: qui caput pontificis chrismate consecratur, brachium vero principis oleo delinitur: ut ostendatur quanta sit differentia auctoritatem pontificis et principis potestatem.

The pontifical superiority herein, and in many other of these Decretals, claimed over secular princes, is not a prerogative stretched, or a dignity usurped; but a necessary consequence of the characteristic principle of the Papacy, and it is involved in what we have stated as the first element of its theory, namely, the infinite importance of whatever relates to religion; and by inference, the subordination of whatever is temporal and earthly. A very large portion of this collection of decisions lays down the law concerning that control over persons, property, and civil privileges, which the Church assumed to exert, on the ground of her cognizance of morals. The canon law, as here exhibited, touched, directly or remotely, almost every interest and every

transaction of common life; nothing was actually exempted from sacerdotal interference; the Church was not merely the *highest* authority on earth, but the *only* authority, so far as she chose to express and exert her will. Of the power assumed by the pontiffs, as guardians of truth, the Decretals concerning heretics afford evidence enough, that it extended to the inmost movements of the soul, and that it sustained itself by the right to inflict, at discretion, the most extreme penalties, affecting the posterity of the guilty, as well as themselves, and including the subversion of any government that opposed itself to the papal will. Let it be remembered that this absolute despotism of the Church, in the twelfth century, was nothing more than the digested and fully expressed despotism, the origin of which we must look for among the records of almost the earliest times of the Church.

But it remains to adduce a few passages from that eminent and eloquent champion of the Church, St. Bernard, whose personal influence, in his times, and whose spirited and impassioned writings, contributed more than the influence or writings, perhaps, of any other individual whatever, to animate, invigorate, and recommend, the papal tyranny, and the Romish superstition.

One passage we have already quoted: in quoting another which may properly follow it, we owe to St. Bernard the justice to say that, though included in his works, its genuineness is questioned by his learned editor. Quamtam dignitatem contulit vobis (pastoribus) Deus, quanta est prærogativa ordinis vestri! Prætulit vos Deus regibus et imperatoribus; prætulit ordinem vestrum omnibus ordinibus, immo (ut altius loquar) prætulit vos angelis et archangelis, thronis et dominationibus. Sicut enim non angelos, sed semen Abrahæ apprehendit ad faciendam redemptionem: sic non angelis, sed hominibus, solisque sacerdotibus, Dominici corporis et sanguinis

commisit consecrationem. Omnes enim, sicut ait Apostolus, &c. Sed longe excellentius est officium vestrum, quod admirabile est, et non solum in occulis vestris, sed etiam angelorum.

The following is from his undisputed epistles; and is part of a letter of affected surprise and remonstrance, on learning that his pupil had been elected pope: it is addressed, Ad totam Curiam Romanam, quando elegerunt Abbatem S. Anastasii in Papam Eugenium.

Quid igitur rationis seu consilii habuerit, defuncto summo Pontifice, repente irruere in hominem rusticanum, latenti injicere manus, et excussa è manibus securi et ascia vel ligone, in palatium trahere, levare in cathedram, induere purpura et bysso, accingere gladio ad faciendam vindictam in nationibus, increpationes in populis, ad alligandos reges eorum in compedibus, et nobiles eorum in manicis fereis? Sic non erat inter vos sapiens et exercitatus, cui potius ista convenirent? Ridiculum profecto videtur, pannosum homuncionem assumi ad præsidendum Principibus, ad imperandum Episcopis, ad regna et imperia disponenda. Ridiculum, an miraculum? Plane unum horum. Non nego, non diffido posse fuisse hoc etiam opus Dei, qui facit mirabilia magna solus: præsertim cum audiam usquequeque ex ore multorum, quoniam à Domino factum est istud ..... Ita inquam, ita et de nostro Eugenio in beneplacito Domini potuit contigisse.

In the epistle which follows, to his spiritual son, and now his 'Father and Lord,' St. Bernard says he had waited, expecting a messenger who should have conveyed the authentic tidings of his elevation, saying—'Joseph thy son liveth, and is become lord of all the land of Egypt.' Congratulations and warnings are added, and the pious wish that his son might fulfil the desires of the Church, in the plucking up of spurious plants. Ad hoc enim constitutus es super gentes et regna, ut evellas,

et destruas, et ædifices, et plantes. On what principle the pontifical authority was to be exercised he soon finds occasion to declare; Et ut planius quod loquimur fiat, peremptoriam dare sententiam ad depositionem Episcoporum, solius Romani pontificis noscitur esse, pro eo nimirum quod etsi alii multi vocati sunt in partem solicitudinis, solus ipse plenitudinem habeat potestatis. Solus proinde, si dicere audeam, in culpa est si culpa non feritur, quæ ferienda est: et eo impetu, quo fuerit ferienda. Quo autem impetu, non dico ferienda, sed fulminanda fuerit prædicti Eboracensis culpa, vestræ conscientiæ derelinquo. Ceterum quod factum non est, vobis credimus reservatum, ut in eo experiatur Ecclesia Dei, cui ipso auctore præestis, fervorem zeli vestri, potentiam brachii vestri, et animi sapientiam: et timeat omnis populus sacerdotem Domini, audiens sapientiam Dei esse in illo ad faciendum judicium.

In giving various advices to his pontifical son, St. Bernard reminds him that there is 'none on earth greater than himself,' and that one must go out of the world to find any thing that does not, or that ought not, to come under his control. Ego enim reor, quod sicut illic Seraphim et Cherubim, et ceteri quique usque ad angelos et archangelos, ordinantur sub uno capite Deo; ita hic quoque sub uno summo pontifice primates vel patriarchæ, archiepiscopi, episcopi, presbyteres, vel abbates et reliqui in hunc modum. And yet what was the actual character of the seat and centre of this heaven-descended and spiritual hierarchy? Hear St. Bernard, writing to a pope. Scio ubi habitas; (is this an allusion to Rev. ii. 13?) increduli et subversores sunt tecum. Lupi, non oves sunt: talium tamen tu pastor: and of the ecclesiastics of the papal court; Sed nec tuta tibi tua bonitas, obsessa malis, non magis quàm sanitas, vicino serpente. . . . . Sed sive levent, sive gravent, cui rectius imputandum quàm tibi, qui tales aut elegisti, aut admis-

sisti. Non de omnibus dico; nam sunt quos non elegisti, sed ipsi te. To wit—the college of cardinals.

St. Bernard is always labouring with the vast idea of the Romish hierarchy—a supernatural scheme, embracing all things, and standing as the means of immediate connexion between heaven and earth—the chain between time and eternity. To bring the reality up to the ideal, was the fond object of his fervent endeavours. With this view he aimed at several great purposes, namely:—to reanimate the Church generally, by a new infusion of elevated and impassioned sentiments; and his writings are indeed admirably adapted to effect such a renovation:—to reform the pontifical character, and the papal court; or, as we may say, to cleanse the Augean stable of Rome:—to recover the Holy Land for Christendom, as a means at once of removing the infidel power from the vicinity of the Church, and of embracing the Greek Church within the arms of that of Rome: and—to remove from the universal fold the scandal and contagion of heresy. In pursuit of this last object, St. Bernard's conviction that, unless secured, every other measure was useless, carried him to frightful extremities. While following him on this ground, we lose all trace of the Christian, and see only the fiery, we might add, the sanguinary zealot. But his penetrating and politic spirit discerned clearly that there was no alternative: like Ximenes, and many other illustrious Romanists, he felt, in the clearest and most forcible manner, the utter inconsistency of any sort of toleration with the first principles of the papacy. To stand by inertly, while the souls of men were catching the contagion of eternal death, or not to arrest the infinite mischief by the most severe means, was the greatest imaginable sin, on the part of those to whom the spiritual welfare of mankind was entrusted. Twenty passages from St. Bernard might soon be adduced in which this sentiment, under different modifications, is expressed;

and it is an inseparable element of the papal theory. The great Churchmen of the 12th century knew their ground, and stood upon it boldly: our modern Romanists have surrendered every thing, in disclaiming principles of intolerance.

In addressing Innocent II., concerning the opinions (heresy) of Peter Abelard, St. Bernard thus writes: Verum tu, o successor Petri, judiciabis, an debeat habere refugium sedem Petri, qui Petri fidem impugnat. Tu, inquam, amice Sponsi providebis, quomodo liberes sponsam à labiis iniquis, et à lingua dolosa. Sed ut paulo audacius loquar cum domino meo, attende etiam tibi ipsi, amantissime Pater, et gratiæ Dei quæ in te est . . . . . Suscitavit Deus furorem schismaticorum in tuo tempore, ut tuo opere contererentur. . . . . Et in schismate quidem jam, ut dictum est, Dominus probavit te, et cognovit te. Sed ne quid desit coronæ tuæ, in hæreses surrexerunt. Itaque ad consummationem virtutum, et ne quid minus fecisse inveniamini à magnis Episcopis antecessoribus vestris; capite nobis Pater amantissime, vulpes quæ demoliuntur vineam Domini donec parvulæ sunt; ne, si crescant et multiplicentur, quicquid talium per vos non fuerit exterminatum, à posteris desperetur. Quamquam non jam parvulæ nec pauculæ, sed certe grandiusculæ et multæ sint, nec nisi in manu forti vel a vobis exterminabuntur.

Much of the same sort is scattered through his letters and sermons; the general principle being this, that schismatics and heretics, after resisting argument and persuasion, were, by the aid of the secular power, to be pursued to death, in whatever way might seem the most sure and safe.

We may here quote, as it occurs, a paragraph from an Epistle of Innocent II. to St. Bernard, who quotes Marcianus: Licet laicus, christianissimus tamen Imperator, catholicæ fidei amoré succensus, prædecessori nostro

sanctissimo Papæ Johanni scribens adversus eos qui sacra mysteria profanare contendunt, inter cetera sic loquitur, dicens; Nemo clericus, vel militaris, vel alterius cujuslibet conditionis, de fide christiana publice tractare conetur in posterum. Nam injuriam facit judicio reverendissimæ synodi, si quis semel judicata et recte disposita revolvere, et iterum disputare contendit: et in contemptores hujus legis, tanquam in sacrilegos, pœna non deerit. Igitur si clericus erit,qui publice tractare de religione ausus fuerit, consortio clericorum removebitur.

Who is not reminded of a passage in 'his Majesty's Declaration,' prefixed to the Thirty-nine Articles?. It is surely not now too soon to blot from our national formularies expressions and sentiments proper enough to popery, but a scandal to protestantism, and insulting to the feelings and practices of the times. What is there that may be called obsolete, if the arrogant language of spiritual despotism is not so? Obstinately to adhere to what is obsolete, is ourselves to become obsolete; and nothing else can follow but that we should be left in the rear, and forgotten.

P. 341.—'A full exhibition of the superstitions of the primitive ages.'

While sending this Appendix to press, the author has received a copy of the learned and very important work of Mr. William Osburn, jun., on the 'Doctrinal Errors of the Apostolical and Early Fathers'—a work than which none could be much more seasonable, or possess a stronger claim to the attention of the clergy of the Established Church. The author does not take upon him to recommend a book which may well be left to recommend itself: but he avails himself of the opportunity thus to mention it to any of his readers under whose eye it might not otherwise fall. Mr. Osburn and the author have been travelling over the same ground,

and each alike has carried with him, not the solicitudes or the prepossessions of a theologian; but the free notions of a Christian layman:—they have moreover reached, on several points, the same general conclusions, and have even happened to express their opinions, more than once or twice, in a phraseology remarkably coincident. Mr. Osburn and the author are alike deeply impressed with the melancholy fact of the early and extensive corruption of Christianity; both feel the absurdity of talking of the purity and spirituality of the pristine Church, and the utter error of dating that corruption from the time of Constantine. Again, both would strongly urge the importance, at the present moment, of learned and ingenuous inquiries concerning those false notions and superstitions which, having had their birth in the second century, or sooner, were permitted to live in our reformed Churches; but which now encumber our practical Christianity, confuse our theology, and generate interminable disagreements among the clergy. Finally, Mr. Osburn and the author agree in fervently desiring the welfare and perpetuity of the Episcopal and Established Church.

The author finds however that he would have to except against, or to qualify, some of Mr. Osburn's representations—not indeed as altogether unfounded, or substantially erroneous; but as being either too strongly expressed, or as excluding certain considerations essential to an impartial apprehension of the subject. It is the eleventh chapter only that the author has as yet read (on Ecclesiastical Polity and Persons) and he must profess to think that, in this chapter, the clerical authority, as asserted by the apostles, is set at too low a mark, or is too vaguely stated; while the clerical assumptions of the Apostolical Fathers—Clement and Ignatius especially, are reprehended with too little regard to the circumstances of the times.

The passages cited by Mr. Osburn (or most of them) have again and again been adduced in modern controversy, and are perhaps as familiar to general readers as any portion of ancient Christian literature. But what probability has there been that, in a controversy such as the one which has rent the Church on the subject of clerical power, a perfectly fair use should have been made of them? appealed to on the one side, and the other, with a fixed purpose, and with exasperated feelings, the *evidence* has meant any thing and every thing. Mr. Osburn has set this evidence free from certain misrepresentations, but (as the author thinks) has not well secured it against perversions of another sort.

The author (of Spiritual Despotism) has not made the use which might have been expected of the epistles of the Apostolical Fathers, in exhibiting the rise of church tyranny; and the sight of Mr. Osburn's book leads him to explain, briefly, the reasons of his not having adduced them distinctly, in the fifth Section. In the first place then he must acknowledge a degree of diffidence in relation to the text of certain parts of these venerable remains; — a diffidence perhaps unjustifiable; but yet such as would make him hesitate in throwing the stress of an argument upon particular phrases. This is not the place for critical discussions, and the author simply avows the shade of doubt that rests upon his mind; and he will take occasion to express a wish that some modern scholar, competent to the task, would employ his leisure in so collating analogous passages (and there are many) in the epistles of the Apostolical Fathers, and in the Apostolic Constitutions, as should serve to render the one as well as the other available, in a satisfactory way, on questions of Christian antiquity.

But this suspicion, concerning the text of these Fathers, has not been the author's principal reason for not adducing their epistles in illustration of the rise of

spiritual despotism. The passages cited by Mr. Osburn are indeed (like almost every thing else in early church literature) liable to serious exceptions; but, in the first place, justice demands (justice to these martyr bishops) that we should not read them in the light of the church history of later times. The author is bold to say, that the apparent offensiveness of the passages in question results, in a great degree, from a tacit and involuntary association of ideas, connecting these same unguarded and too lofty assertions of spiritual authority, with the preposterous sacerdotal arrogance of the bishops of the third and fourth centuries, and of the pontiffs of the tenth and twelfth. Entirely disjoined from this mental assimilation, the language of Ignatius is at once lowered several degrees in its import, and is fairly liable only to a moderate reprehension. Throughout our researches on the field of Christian antiquity, this same difficulty of *setting off* from the opinions and sentiments of the men of each age, the ill comment or the abuse which the history of the following times has, in our minds, connected therewith, besets us. The author must frankly confess that it has been more than he has been able always, or often, to effect, to read the Fathers with the feeling, and in the light of a contemporary, and as if he knew nothing of the history of the age next following that of each writer.

Furthermore, the author can by no means go so far as some have done, or so far as Mr. Osburn goes, in attributing the reprehensible language of the Apostolic Fathers to sacerdotal ambition. That this feeling entered into their minds we must not deny; but yet should fully consider the circumstances of the times before judgment is given against them. In what position then did these pastors stand? They had received their appointment from the very hands of the apostles, or the companions of the apostles. There was no room for them to be diffident

of their own personal authority. To maintain this authority, and to exert it (in the spirit, and with the humility of their predecessors) was not merely lawful, but was their solemn duty. At the same time, in many of the Grecian cities, where republican sentiments were rife, the disposition to resist constituted authorities was vehement. The Churches, moreover, were set upon by itinerant fanatics, of every stamp, Jewish zealots, Platonic dreamers, Gnostics, and philosophists, eastern and western; and the people were but too prone to give ear to these pestilent disturbers, and to turn away from those who insisted upon the plain and practical principles of the Gospel. The times predicted by St. Paul had actually come, when men would no longer endure sound doctrine; but would court those who could tickle their ears with mischievous novelties. How should these disorders be composed, or how this tide be rolled back? The apostolic pastors must have felt that every thing was in jeopardy, and the Gospel itself, so far as human means were involved, not unlikely to be overpowered and lost.

In this extremity, for such it must have seemed to them, these pastors, no longer furnished, or not ordinarily so, with the weapons of miraculous power, leaned upon AUTHORITY, rather than upon the direct reasons and motives with which the apostolic writings would have supplied them. It was not strange that they did so; they could not foresee that they were by this means laying the first stones of the papal pandemonium. The terms in which they affirmed their own powers, and urged the people to implicit submission, though not to be altogether defended, may fairly be exempted from severe blame. Our Lord, in addressing his ministers says—"Verily I say unto you, whosoever receiveth you, receiveth me; and he that receiveth me, receiveth him that sent me"—and the converse. St. Paul had declared that the Church was "built on the foundation of the

apostles and prophets," &c. —a foundation that was to have a superstructure. Now these apostolic pastors rested on the foundation as the very next layer of the building; and they were the men next to those to whom the highest powers had been assigned by the highest authority: they were sent by those whom the Lord had sent; they were those upon whom hands had been laid, in obedience to St. Paul's instructions—"What thou hast received commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also." In what light then must they have regarded their own position, and their cause, as opposed to the pretensions and the seditious endeavours of the false teachers? It is easy to see that they must have felt themselves fully justified in the endeavour to bring back the people to obedience to rightful authority. Every thing was at stake—themselves vanquished by the virulent agitators, and what was likely but that the truth of God should have fallen with them?

St. Paul indeed rejoiced in the preaching of Christ, even by the contentious; but St. Paul enjoyed the serenity and the assurance proper to an inspired and a miraculously endowed person. Ignatius on his way to martyrdom, had no such tranquillity; and he felt that he was leaving the field open to wolves and foxes. He was racked by a genuine anxiety for the fate of the Churches. Say that his notions of sacerdotal power were exaggerated, and say too that the language he employed was of a kind which his less worthy and more ambitious successors would be sure to abuse. Let all this be granted, and yet we dare not hale the martyr to the tribunal of modern notions, as the guilty originator of spiritual despotism.

The author well knows he might have made a great show in the section on the First Steps of Spiritual Despotism, with the epistles of Ignatius and Polycarp; but he has refrained from doing so; and must leave it to his

intelligent and competent readers to decide whether he has herein betrayed and impoverished his argument, or only shown a deserved indulgence to the companions of the apostles, and the martyr-bishops of the first age.

The author may take this opportunity to state why he has not adduced a specimen of the many striking instances of sacerdotal arrogance that might be gathered from the apocryphal writings of the third and fourth centuries. The Apostolic Constitutions he has indeed referred to reservedly; but has not brought forward the Canons of the Apostles, the Recognitions of Clement, or the Clementine Homilies. It is not that these compositions do not contain an abundance of available evidence; but to make use of it safely is an affair of no small difficulty. Critical and historical inquiries of the most intricate sort, ought to precede any such appeal to them; and the author is far from professing himself master of this branch of learning. Moreover he is of opinion that these suspicious works may be appealed to with more certainty in relation to the theological opinions and superstitious notions and practices of the times when they were composed, than in reference to questions of church polity, and the prerogatives of the clergy; inasmuch as these were the *very points* most likely to have been distinctly kept in view by the writers, as the main, though unavowed, objects of their spurious labours. In following therefore the progress of SUPERSTITION, these apocryphal remains may lend an aid, which we do not seek for from them in stating the rise of SPIRITUAL DESPOTISM. The author, moreover, begs the reader to remember that not a few facts which ought to have found a place in the present volume, had it stood alone, are well omitted in a work which is one of a series. Spiritual Despotism and Superstition are indeed intimately connected, and it may be doubted which of the two should be regarded as the *leading* theme. Perhaps the

claims of the two are evenly balanced: but both have an immediate and highly important bearing upon the religious movements of our own times:—the first (chiefly) because a misplaced jealousy of clerical power is tending to the further depression of an influence which needs rather to be restored:—and the second (chiefly) because our modern Christianity is, in more modes than one, and among all parties, affected by those perversions and corruptions which we are compelled to assign to the first century. It may boldly be affirmed that popery will not be refuted, nor the Reformation consummated, until the superstitions of the martyr Church are thoroughly explored, and popularly understood. Every writer overrates the importance of the particular theme he undertakes. This natural and common prejudice allowed for, the author will yet assert the high practical significance of the line of inquiry in which he is now engaged, and especially in reference to the present position of the Established Church. Happy will he be to find that, on the path he pursues—a path not strewed with roses, he has companions and competitors. The work now to be done needs every advantage of cooperation, and of generous rivalry; yes, and of Christian and mannerly opposition. The author must deem every man a brother who loves Christianity, and who labours to promote it. Interests vastly surmounting all personal considerations are now at stake; and whoever presumes to put a hand to the great movements of the day, should come forward thoroughly prepared to count all things as dross which have reference simply to himself. To be known, or to be unknown, on the theatre of literary emulation, of what importance is it? To have been inconsiderately lauded, or to have been illiberally contemned, by this journal, or by that, of what significance? Assuredly the motives which would lay a man open, very sensitively, to influences of this sort, are of a kind that must fail to bear

him through the oppressive labours of remote historical research. Well would it be if both writers and critics could more constantly bear in mind the plain but momentous considerations of the brevity and precariousness of the season through which, individually, our opportunity of doing any good extends, the account to be rendered of our personal agency, and the infinite consequences, to our fellows, that attach often to the part we take in religious revolutions. If the author, in his first section, has appealed from the tribunal of our periodic literature, to the better judgment of the public, he has done so under the serious and strong impression that, from the peculiar circumstances attending this species of writing, it hardly ever, if at all, comes under the control of those high motives, apart from which great religious controversies should never be touched.

To revert for a moment to the point from which he set out, the author must further anticipate the exceptions of those who may think that certain flaming affirmations of the dignity of the Christian Priesthood, made by the florid orators of the fourth century, should have filled a prominent place in the present volume: for instance, the enormities of spiritual inflation that abound in Chrysostom's Treatise on the Priesthood. Earth trembles under this churchman's magniloquence; but the real value of it, in relation to our immediate subject, entirely turns upon the decision of a preliminary question, namely, that concerning the sacraments, or 'mysteries of the Church.' If Chrysostom's doctrine, on these points, be justifiable and sound, the pretensions he advances, and the prerogatives and dignities he challenges, are justifiable also. If popery be Christianity, Chrysostom spoke only the words of truth and soberness when he sought to rear the priest to the third heavens. The treatise we have mentioned is liable to the charge of promoting spiritual despotism only when the doctrine it assumes has been

disproved. The same must be said of a hundred pages of the ecclesiastical rhetoric of the fourth and fifth centuries.

APPENDIX TO SECTION VIII.

Page 346.—'Sed et ut multa alia ille (Lutherus) reliquit, ita etiam hoc negotium posteris tradidit, ut quos reddiderat fontes, his uti melius discerent, ipsamque doctrinam, ex illis fontibus haustam, ab omnibus humanorum opinionum commentis magis magisque liberarent. Quod non ab ipso Luthero confectum esse nemo mirabitur; quanquam in illo tale ingenium fuit, ut, nisi aliorum laborum gravissimorum multitudo virum ab eo otio, quod antiquarum literarum studium quum maxime exposcit, avocasset; vera librorum N. T. interpretatione superior omnibus æqualibus futurus fuisse videatur: sed post tria fere secula, post tantosque virorum summorum labores, nondum certis legibus compositam esse artem interpretandi N. T. id tam mirum videri debet omnibus, ut, nisi illius artis difficultates, et vitiorum, quibus ea etiamnum laborat, causas norint, vix crediturі sint.' *Titmann.*

What is true of the system of interpretation, and the theology of Luther and his illustrious companions, is true of his ecclesiastical notions, and of theirs. Every thing we inherit from these great men demands to be reconsidered.

Page 363.—'A church-and-state system.' Even if his proper subject, and his space, might admit it, the

author would be reluctant to advance any thing upon the abstract question of a church-and-state polity; and especially for this reason, that speculative arguments of this sort tend to distract the public mind from those more important and urgent questions that relate to the renovation and improvement of our ACTUAL ESTABLISHMENT. We are not about (it may be hoped) to melt down the entire mass of our institutions, and to cast them anew; but to correct and amend, to purify and to invigorate, what we possess. Theories which assume nothing as existing in fact, are properly entertained, either in new countries, where the rude elements of society have to be combined; or in old countries, where every thing that exists is too desperately corrupt to admit of amendment. England, we presume, is as remote from the one of these conditions, as it is from the other.

Page 367.—Every man of sense and right feeling, who cares for the Established Church, and desires its welfare, must be penetrated with sorrow and humiliation in hearing the insufferable language and doctrines of the times of Charles II. repeated, up to the present hour, by certain of the clergy. It is more than can well be expected from human nature that the Dissenters should listen to this outrageous bigotry in magnanimous silence. On the contrary, it exasperates, not merely the intemperate and factious, but the moderate and respectable. Does the Church then think herself so strong that she may, in safety, insult and revile some millions of the people; and not the least intelligent or powerful portion of them? This is an illusion not unlikely to be dissipated. But where is the Christian temper of a Church that deals in, or that authenticates calumnies and curses? or where is episcopal authority, that does not visit the offenders with grave and public rebukes?

Clergymen may know what will suit the taste and temper of their order; but they do not always know (or appear to know) the taste, temper, and tacit sentiments of the laity. At the present moment it is not a few of the laity of England whose good will and active friendship it would be wise to conciliate:—not a few there are, well informed, even in matters of religion, temperate in opinion, well inclined to sustain our Ecclesiastical Constitutions;—some of them, perhaps, possessed of influence over the public mind, and ready to employ this influence, whether more or less extensive, for the support of the Church: but is it expected from them that, in doing so, they should join hands with Sacheverels, or with some who had better have lived in the twelfth century than have disgraced the nineteenth? There is a singular want of tact and discretion on the part of those who, by giving countenance to zealots, fix a deep disgust in the minds of the intelligent laity. It is not a day too soon for the Established Church to put away from herself a mode of behaviour which she cannot maintain, and hold at the same time the hearts and reverence of the better portion of the English people.

APPENDIX TO SECTION IX.

Page 387. — The author believes he shall not go beyond the limits of his actual knowledge of the state of opinion among the dissenting clergy, in affirming that, in reference to questions of ecclesiastical polity, the body is by no means accordant; for while the majority (perhaps) is actively and warmly attached to extreme principles, and is thoroughly democratic and congregational (democratic in ecclesiastical affairs) there is a considerable

and a highly respectable party among whom the suspicion has been long growing that their polity is unsound in principle, and inexpedient in fact. This would be the very moment for these intelligent men ingenuously to avow their discontents. Dissent would not be weakened but strengthened by their doing so:—or what is far better, a path would be cleared of conference and conciliation, which might open at length upon a fair field of Christian peace. May Heaven in its infinite goodness so lead forward the minds of the wise and sincere among us, as shall issue in thwarting the designs of the factions, in healing every division among those who love the same Lord, and in securing the permanent religious prosperity of the empire!

THE END.

R. CLAY, PRINTER, BREAD-STREET-HILL.

00059738

Digitized with financial assistance from the
Government of Maharashtra
on 15 June, 2016